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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

C H A R L E M A G N E.

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THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

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LIFE AND TIMES
OF
CHARLEMAGNE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE reign of Charlemagne has a two-fold interest—historical and biographical. Historically, it has a peculiar value and importance, as the era of the reconstruction of European society. For five centuries the northern hordes had been pouring down upon the Roman empire. That flood of barbarous invasion had swept Europe from side to side, from end to end. Goth, Saxon, Frank, Burgundian, Slavon, Hun, Avar, rushed on in wild confusion; the foremost in advance impelled onward by the ever-increasing pressure in the rear. In the storm and fury of these barbaric inroads, the whole fabric of society had been destroyed; and, with a few exceptions, all the productions of ancient science, literature, and art, perished. All that has come down to us are but the fragments and relics rescued from that wreck. Well may that period be styled “the dark ages!” We use no hyperbole when we apply to it the language in which Scripture describes

the primeval chaos, and say, "the world was without form and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

Whilst all Europe felt the fury of the storm, Germany and France were its focus and centre. It was there that the conflicting torrents met, and that the devastation and ruin were complete. It was there, too, that the work of reconstruction was to commence ; "for," in the words of Frederick Schlegel, "it was Charlemagne who laid the sure foundation for Christian government, and all the improvements of its subsequent superstructure. On this basis of Christian government and Christian manners, and under the cover and vivifying influence of Christian faith, sprang human science out of the small fragments of ancient art and learning which had survived all these mighty devastations." It was, then, an era of vast historical importance.

But the life of Charlemagne has a still further interest and value as a biography. He combined in himself most of the elements of true greatness. Great by his position, through his achievements, and in his character ; distinguished as a soldier, a legislator, a church reformer, and a reviver of learning—his personal history demands and amply repays a diligent study. Whilst his genius and energy would have rendered him illustrious in any age, his loneliness and isolation in the period in which he lived make him more signally and obviously so. He stands alone, and there are none around him to contest

with him the palm of greatness. Like the pyramid in the desert, the blank waste from which he rises seems to give him a more commanding elevation. Among the generations which preceded and which followed his, our own Alfred* alone can rank with him.

In the brief sketch which follows, we shall endeavour to combine these two sources of interest—the historical and the biographical; and at the same time to show the relations subsisting between Charlemagne, his contemporaries, and his immediate predecessors, so as to afford some idea of the general character of that eventful era. In doing this, we shall for the most part follow the plan adopted by Eginhardt, the secretary, biographer, and friend, (perhaps, too, as we shall see, the son-in-law) of the hero of our pages. We shall first give a brief and hasty glance at the previous history of the Franks; thus we shall learn the character of the people he came to rule, and the disorderly condition of society in his day; then proceed to trace out his career and achievements as a soldier and a legislator, his relations with the papacy, and his personal character, history, and influence.

* A Life of Alfred is published in the Monthly Series.

CHAPTER I.

THE FRANKISH MONARCHY.

The formation of the confederacy of the Franks—Their feelings toward Rome—*Clovis*—His victories; his crimes; his conversion—Inquiry into the nature of the national conversions of the middle ages—The successors of *Clovis*—The Mayors of the Palace—The defeat of the Mohammedans by *Charles Martel*—*Pepin*—His character; legend of the lion and bull; his accession to the throne in place of the deposed monarch—Succeeded by *Carloman* and *Carl*—Character and death of the former—*Carl* becomes sole king of the Franks—Outline of his history—Is acknowledged as emperor of the West, and receives the name of *Charlemagne*.

TACITUS, in his "Treatise on the Customs and Tribes of Germany," describes with patriotic shame the defeats of the Roman legions by the barbarians, points out the danger with which the empire was threatened from this quarter, and shows that the best hope of safety for Rome was afforded by the intestine feuds of her enemies. "Since they will not love us, I pray that their hatred of one another may continue and increase; for in our present perilous condition, fortune can afford us nothing better than the discord of our foes."* But the evils apprehended by the philosophical historian were not to be thus averted. Pagan Rome had filled up the measure of her iniquities. The blood of

* *De Moribus Germanorum*, cap. xxxiii.

the martyrs had sapped the foundations of her empire, had paralysed her arm, and blunted her sword. "The souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. vi. 9, 10. God did not turn a deaf ear, as their blood cried from the ground. "He will avenge his own elect, though he bear long with them." History teaches no truth with more certainty than that the persecution of the church is the ruin of those empires by which it is inflicted. And now the hour of retribution was come. Those tribes whose union Tacitus deprecated, learning wisdom from their disasters, began to band together to throw off the detested yoke, and to smite the tyrant to the dust. Among the associations formed for this purpose, none were more formidable than that of the Chauci, Catti, Cherusci, Sicambri, and other smaller tribes who inhabited the marshes of the lower Rhine and of the Weser. The spirit and design of the confederation is shown by the name they assumed—Franks, or Freeman. At first, the tribes thus associated retained their distinctness and mutual independence, their only bond of union being the object they had in common. Very soon, however, all tribal distinctions ceased, and they became fused down into one powerful though barbarous nation, divided into two great branches, the Salic and the Ripu-

arian. These names were probably derived from the localities they respectively inhabited, the Salians being settled on the Saal, the Ripuarians on the banks (*ripæ*) of the Rhine.

In speaking of this and the other confederations as being the instruments of Divine vengeance upon the doomed and guilty city, "drunk with the blood of the saints," we are only expressing the sentiments of the barbarians themselves. Alaric always professed himself to be the minister of the wrath of the Almighty. Attila took the title of "the Scourge of God." Genseric, when asked by his pilot whither he should steer, replied, "Leave that to the winds and waves; they will direct us to the guilty city on which God wills his vengeance to fall." The language of the Franks is yet more remarkable. In the preamble to the Salic code, composed shortly after their conversion to Christianity, it is said, "Honour to Christ who loves the Franks. This is the nation, which, though small, yet brave and strong, shook off the hard yoke of Rome, and which, after it had recognised the sacredness of baptism, adorned with gold and precious stones the tombs of the martyrs whom the Romans had burned with fire, massacred, mutilated, or delivered to be torn to pieces by wild beasts."

The Franks first assumed an important position in Europe under the reign of Clovis,* the

* Clovis, from Hlodo-wig, "famous warrior," latinized into Clodovicus and Ludovicus, abbreviated into Clovis and Ludwig, modernized into Louis and Louisa.

grandson of Merowig, who was born in the year 467. The original seat of this prince's government was Tournay in Flanders, but he exercised a disputed and precarious sovereignty over the northern districts of Gaul as far as Paris. In his fifteenth year, he succeeded his father Childeric, and five years later he had routed Syagrius, king of a neighbouring tribe, and made Soissons, the conquered capital, his own metropolis. An incident which happened immediately after the battle that put Clovis in possession of Soissons, well illustrates the small advance which the Franks had yet made toward a settled monarchy. The spoils of the conquered army were, as usual, heaped together to be divided by lot among the victors. It so happened that an elaborate and exquisite vase, one of the sacred vessels of a pillaged church, fell to the share of a private soldier. Clovis requested him to transfer it to himself. The soldier insolently refused, saying, that he only owed him allegiance on the field of battle, but that everywhere else they were equals; and raising his battle-axe, shattered the vase to atoms. The young king was compelled to bear the affront thus publicly put upon him. He did not forget it, however, for in the next engagement he rode up to the soldier, charged him with disobeying his orders, and ran him through the body with his sword.

It would be a tedious and useless task to narrate in detail the modes by which Clovis succeeded in ridding himself of his rivals and allies, and

obtaining possession of their dominions. A single incident, condensed from the prolix pages of Gregory of Tours, will do more to illustrate the character of the king and the age than pages of description. "When Clovis came to battle against Alaric, he had for an ally Cloderic the son of Sigbert. This Sigbert limped from a blow on the knee, which he had received at the battle of Tolbiac, fighting against the Germans. Clovis sent secretly to the son of Sigbert, saying, 'Your father is aged, and he limps with his bad leg; if he should chance to die his kingdom and our friendship would be transferred from him to you.' Seduced by this prospect, Cloderic determined to kill his father. Not long after this, Sigbert having gone out of the town of Cologne, went into the neighbouring forest of Buconia, and there fell asleep in his tent. Whilst sleeping he was killed by assassins sent by his son for that purpose. But by the judgment of God, he fell into the grave he had dug for his father. He sent to king Clovis to announce what had happened. Clovis sent back this answer: 'I thank thee for thy good will, and pray thee to show thy father's treasures to my messengers, after which thou shalt possess them all.' Cloderic thereupon showed the treasures to the deputies. As they were admiring them, the prince said, 'This is the box in which my father used to keep his gold coins.' They replied, 'Reach thine hand down to the bottom of the box that we may see them all.' As he stooped low for this purpose,

one of them lifted up his axe and split open his skull. Then Clovis went to Cologne, and advised the people to put themselves under his protection. They answered him by loud shouts, and having raised him upon their shields, made him their king, and gave to him the kingdom and treasures of Sigbert. Thus, every day," says his biographer, in a manner that shows how blunted were his perceptions of good and evil, "God caused his enemies to fall before him, and augmented his kingdom, *because he walked with an upright heart before the Lord, and did the things which were pleasing in his sight.*" To this may be added an extract from the table of contents to Sismondi's "*Histoire des Français*," which, though probably undesigned, has the effect of the keenest satire: "Clovis wishes to kill all the rival kings of France. He has Sigbert and his son Cloderic assassinated. He has Cararic and his son put to death. Afterwards Ragnacair and his two brothers. He has all the other kings of France slain. *The church considers whether he should be reckoned as a saint!*"*

By such means as these Clovis speedily made himself acknowledged sole chief of the Salian Franks, and extended his authority over most of northern and central Gaul. His alliance was eagerly courted by the neighbouring princes, and he asked and gained in marriage Clotilda, niece of Gondebald, king of the Bur-

In the body of his work, Sismondi affirms that he was actually canonized, together with his wife.

gundians.* She was a Christian princess, and Clovis, though a pagan, did not forbid her having their children baptized. The death of the first upon whom this rite was performed produced an unfavourable impression upon the king's mind, but by degrees he was so far won over by the influence of his wife and the exhortations of her chaplain Remigius, as to declare that he was willing to adopt her religion provided that he could have convincing proof of the power of her God. Soon afterwards, another of those confederacies which had been formed among the German tribes, and whose members had assumed the name of Allemanni, "all men," became jealous, and perhaps fearful of the growing power of the Franks. A war ensued, and the Allemanni had reached the Rhine, with the intention of marching into Gaul, when they were met by Clovis at Tolbiac. The battle hung long in suspense, and the Franks seemed on the point of receiving a total and ruinous defeat, when their leader remembered the God of the Christians, and the promise he had made Clotilda. In his distress he invoked His aid. The tide of battle turned, and Clovis remained master of the field. He was now more than ever disposed to listen to the entreaties of his queen and her chaplain, and invited the latter to give

* The name Burgundians, from Buhr Gunds, "allied warriors," shows that they were like the Franks, a confederation of tribes. Those of Gonde Bald, "pacific above all," and Clotilda, or Hlodo-hilda, "brilliant and noble," indicate that they had begun to appreciate the benefits of peace.

him fuller information as to the doctrines of the new religion. As Remigius proceeded to do so, he described with so much pathos the character and sufferings of Jesus, that the king started from his seat, and grasping his sword, cried out, "Would I had been there with my Franks, I would have avenged him." He was soon, however, won to milder thoughts, and submitted to baptism. In this he was at once followed by three thousand of his warriors, and speedily the whole nation imitated the example of their chief. It is evident, however, that this conversion was little more than nominal, since long afterwards an image of Diana was worshipped at Treves.* And in the capitularies of Charlemagne, and even of the later Carolingians, there occur frequent enactments against pagan rites and superstitions.

It is necessary to a due understanding of this era that we should inquire into the character and results of these hasty national conversions to the profession of Christianity, so common among the barbarians of that age. In doing this, we must distinguish between what is direct and primary, and what is merely indirect and secondary in religion. In all that concerns the former of these, in true conversion to God, in the commencement of a new spiritual life, consisting of "righteousness, peace, and joy,

* There would seem to be something at Treves favourable to idolatry, since to this day one of the five coats—each of which has been pronounced by papal infallibility to be *the one* worn by our Lord at his crucifixion—is worshipped there by crowds of pilgrims, who cry, "Holy coat, pray for us."

in the Holy Ghost," little or nothing was effected; it was scarcely more than a change of names. The proselytes transferred a superstitious and idolatrous worship from their old Scandinavian gods to the Triune Jehovah and the saints of the Romish church, ascribing to the latter the acts and attributes they had been wont to adore in the former. The names of their deities were changed, but the character and nature of their worship remained the same. It is indeed extraordinary to observe how completely they adapted the forms of the Christian theology to the spirit of their pagan mythology. They were accustomed to invoke Thor as the leader of their armies, as the god of battles; they now called upon the archangel Michael. Instead of deprecating the hostility of Loki, as the embodiment of evil, they began to cherish the same feelings and to use the same language to Satan. The Romish church, meanwhile, so far from opposing this tendency, actually encouraged it, and incorporated the superstitions and ceremonies of heathenism with the pure creed of Christianity. Just as, to adopt the sentiment of Milton, a man may be guilty of heresy and schism, even in the maintenance of orthodox truth, from the heretical and schismatic spirit in which he holds it; so did these tribes continue in the darkness of heathenism, even after their nominal conversion to Christianity. Alas! even in the present day it is still too easy to be orthodox in doctrine, and Scriptural in creed, and yet to remain dead in

trespasses and sins, having only "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." But the mischief of engrafting heathenism on Christianity did not cease with the age and race which was thus professedly brought within the fold of the Saviour, although in reality far removed from it. It is to the pagan additions and perversions thus introduced that very much of the subsequent idolatry and superstition of the Romish church is traceable. The papacy, more anxious to swell the number of her converts than to maintain the purity of her doctrine, not only permitted to them, but even adopted into her own practice many of their ancient rites, utterly alien though they were to the spirit and precepts of the gospel. Hence it is that she presents the monstrous and incongruous spectacle of ceremonies and beliefs drawn from heathen mythologies, incorporated with, or grafted upon, "the truth as it is in Jesus."

But whilst the spiritual results of these alleged national conversions were thus unsatisfactory, the indirect and secondary effects flowing from them were to some considerable extent beneficial. It was no slight advantage, though a negative one, that the proselytized nations escaped the barbarizing influence of their old creed and worship. It was morally impossible for them, whilst they retained these, to advance in civilization. The retention of the ferocious rites and doctrines which they had held and practised in their native forests,

would have interposed an insurmountable obstacle to any progress in the arts of peace. The mere destruction of these barriers, by the abrogation of their ancient worship, was an immense benefit, since it left the path of progress unobstructed. At the same time, it afforded opportunities for those missionaries who were disposed to visit them to do so with safety. Previously they could only venture at the peril of their lives, and with the distinct expectation of being cut off in the midst of their labours. Now they could go without danger, carrying with them the influences and habits of civilization, and in some instances, doubtless, the "glad tidings of great joy." Though many of these missionaries were superstitious and fanatical enthusiasts, yet there were others who were "men of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Such men, with the love of Christ glowing in their hearts, trembling upon their lips, glistening in their tearful eyes, swayed with a sacred eloquence the passions of their rude audiences. Savage men, rugged as the rocks, and fierce as the beasts of prey whom they hunted in the chase, were moved to tears, melted to contrition, and, like the demoniac in the Gospels, "found sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind." God's word, preached by faithful men, did not, could not, return to him void. The nations were not converted, *but individuals were*. And even upon those who did not receive the full saving efficacy of Divine truth, there was

yet exercised a refining influence. If the direct beams from the Sun of righteousness did not reach their hearts, yet a reflected light shone around them, and illuminated their utter darkness ; for in this sense, as well as in a higher and more important one, godliness was found "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is," as well as "that which is to come."

Thus, then, though Christianity was taught in a grossly perverted form, it was still an immense advance upon the fierce and bloody rites of the idolatry it displaced. Its brightness was dimmed, its beauty obscured, and its purity sullied, by superstitious additions and perversions of men, yet it was inconceivably better than the utter hideousness of the systems which had preceded it. It was the morning twilight, bright when compared with the previous darkness, dark in comparison with the perfect day.

Such we believe to be a fair and impartial estimate of the mingled good and evil of those hasty and superficial national conversions of which the history of the middle ages is full, and of which the life of Clovis affords a characteristic instance. To return to our narrative, however. The successors of Clovis by no means inherited his energy and talents. They degenerated with each succeeding generation, till at length they became utterly imbecile, and the entire management of affairs fell into the hands of an officer, styled the mayor of the

palace, or, as we should now call him, the lord high chamberlain. By degrees this office became hereditary in the family of its possessors, and was successively filled by men of distinguished ability—Pepin le Vieux, Pepin d'Heristal, Charles Martel, and Pepin le Bref. Each of these in turn augmented the power of the mayoralty, till ultimately its holder, though nominally only the first subject, was really king, the titular monarch retaining nothing of royalty but the name, and the empty honours of wearing long flowing hair,* and being drawn by oxen in a state wagon to the annual muster of the Franks.

Under the feeble reign of Thierry iv., and the vigorous mayoralty of Charles, an event occurred which greatly increased the power of the real, and proportionately diminished that of the nominal, ruler. The Mohammedan hosts having burst from their native deserts with the resistless force of an avalanche, had spread themselves over the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Having reached the western ocean, Acbar, their commander, spurring his horse into the waves, brandished his scimitar, and cried, like a second Alexander, "O Allah! give me another world to conquer for thee." Energy like this, inspired alike by

* Among the various Frankish tribes, this privilege was confined to the royal family. All besides shaved their heads, leaving only a single tuft, like the scalp lock of North American Indians of the present day. A similar custom prevailed among the Normans up to the time of their invasion of England.

religious fanaticism, military ardour, and the love of plunder, was not to be repressed by ordinary obstacles. The invaders speedily crossed the Strait of Gibraltar,* and very quickly overran the whole of Spain. The sea having failed to check their progress, it could scarcely be expected that mountains would avail to do so. So early as 714, and within three years of their occupation of the Peninsula, Mousa determined to cross the Pyrenees, hoping to be able to crush the Frank and Lombard kingdoms, and thus to gain an opportunity of conquering Italy and Rome itself. Had the enterprise been then proceeded with, it could hardly have failed of success. Circumstances, however, most providentially combined to postpone the attempt till 731, when a host, whose recorded numbers defy credibility, passed the mountain barrier which separates France from Spain. They were commanded by the veteran Abderahman, their most daring and successful leader. The southern provinces of France were soon subdued, plundered, and laid waste. Every attempt made to check their advance failed. The fate of Christendom seemed sealed. Nor can we wonder that men abandoned themselves in despair to their seemingly inevitable doom. But He "who stilleth the noise of the waves and the tumult of the people," had uttered his decree—"Hitherto shalt thou come,

* This name was derived from this circumstance; the rock on which they landed being called by the Arabs Gibel Tarif, or Tarek, "the Hill of Tarif;" that being the name of their leader.

but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Charles, the commander of the Franks, determined to make a last desperate stand in defence of his country and his faith. He mustered his troops on the banks of a little stream between Tours and Poitiers, and there awaited the enemy. For six days the armies lay encamped in sight of each other, content with skirmishing, neither venturing upon a general engagement. Their leaders, feeling that the destinies of Christendom hung trembling in the balance, waited for an opportunity of striking a decisive blow. At length, on a Saturday, in the month of October, 732, the armies met in the shock of battle. In the brief and obscure narrative of contemporary chroniclers, and the wild fictions of subsequent writers, it is very difficult to gain any correct idea of this engagement, which decided whether Europe was to remain Christian or be subjugated beneath the debasing yoke of Mohammed. We only discover that the Franks stood firm as a rock, against which the light-armed and agile Arabs dashed themselves in vain, and were flung off like spray. Charge after charge was made against their phalanx, which Isidore, one of the few contemporary writers, describes "as an immovable mass, like a wall of ice." As the day wore on, the prodigious strength of the Franks began to tell in their favour, and the wearied assailants, unable to charge and wheel round in retreat with the same celerity as in the morning fell fast under their oppo-

nents' blows. Abderahman himself was among the slain. Towards evening, Eudes, count of Aquitaine, led a party round to fall upon the baggage and rear of the invaders. This increased the disorder into which they had already begun to fall, and when night separated the combatants, the Franks remained masters of the field, and the Arabs retired to their tents evidently worsted. It seems probable that Charles wished to pursue them into their encampments, but his soldiers held up their arms, to intimate that they were too exhausted with the toils of the day to continue the engagement. He therefore permitted them to bivouac on the field of battle, and with the first dawn of morning again drew them up in line, expecting a renewal of the attack. To his surprise no enemy appeared; the tents still whitened the plain almost as far as the eye could reach, but there came from them no sound or sign of life. Apprehending treachery, he reconnoitered the hostile camp, and found it indeed deserted. In the dead of the night the Arabs had fled, and were already far in advance. Charles had suffered too much during the battle to follow in pursuit; he therefore divided the rich spoils found in the tents among his soldiers, and dismissed them to their homes. His personal exploits on the field gained for him the name by which he is known in history, Charles Martel, Charles the Hammerer.

Charles Martel having by these and similar achievements augmented the authority of the

mayoralty, died, October 21st, 741, and was succeeded by his sons, Carloman, who speedily retired into a monastery, and Pepin, surnamed *le Bref*, or *le Gros*, in consequence of being exceedingly corpulent, and only four and a half feet high. His prowess and character may be judged of from an incident narrated by Gregory of Tours, which, whether true or false, will show the estimate formed of him by his own age. Hearing that some of his officers had been indulging in jocular remarks on his personal appearance, he invited them to witness a combat between a lion and a wild bull. The animals were let loose together in the arena, when the lion at once sprang upon the bull, and pinned him to the earth. The bull rushed madly to and fro, striving to shake off his fierce assailant, but in vain. "Which of you," said Pepin, turning to his officers, "will make that beast let go his prey?" They only replied by a stare of astonishment. "The task, then," said he, "is mine;" and springing into the arena, armed only with his battle-axe, he assaulted the combatants so impetuously as to kill the lion and drive the bull back to its den.

It was not to be expected that officers so able and energetic as those who held the mayoralty should remain very long subject to kings so feeble as those of France at this period. The condition of affairs, too, was such as to forbid the continued separation of the real and nominal sovereignty. A compact and vigorous govern-

ment was needed to ward off the attacks of foreign enemies, who were crowding on every point of the frontier, as well as to repress those intestine feuds which threatened to rend asunder the imperfectly organized state. Pepin, therefore, having first gained for himself the sole and undivided mayoralty, found no difficulty in inducing the Frank warriors to declare the imbecile line of monarchs at an end, and to place him on the vacant throne. He was inaugurated as king, after the custom of all the Germanic tribes, by being raised on the bucklers of the warriors at their annual assembly, held at Soissons in March, 752. Ecclesiastical consent to the change was either felt to be necessary by the Franks, or deemed expedient by Pepin. Two bishops were therefore despatched to Italy to gain the papal sanction. Just at that crisis, Rome was in imminent peril from many enemies, and needed the strong arm of Pepin and his Franks for its defence. Under these circumstances, the pope promptly replied to Pepin's messenger, that the decision of the nation had been arrived at by heavenly inspiration, and empowered them to substitute for the old line of monarchs one which should discharge the duties as well as bear the name of king. Pepin was thereupon anointed and crowned by Boniface,* and the ceremony was subsequently repeated by the pope himself. Eginhardt quaintly adds, "With regard to Childeric, who

* For a life of this remarkable man see "Lives of Eminent Anglo-Saxons," in this series.

had falsely borne the name of king, Pepin had him shaved and put into a monastery, with his family."

Pepin died in 768, leaving two sons, Carloman and Carl,* or, as we should now call him, Charles, between whom he divided his dominions. The former seems to have been of a suspicious, fretful, and feeble character, constantly engaged in broils with his brother and the other neighbouring chiefs—broils which he entered into without necessity, and abandoned without honour. About two years after the accession of the youths to the throne, we find that Carloman, for some reason not fully explained, began to equip an army to attack the territory of his brother. In the midst of his preparations, however, he suddenly died, A.D. 771. His widow, apprehensive of the resentment of Charles, fled with her two sons to the court of Desiderius, king of the Lombards. Charles marched with his army to the frontiers of his late brother's territory, and was at once chosen by its prelates and nobles to fill the vacant throne. He thus became, in his twenty-seventh year, sole king of the Franks. His dominions now extended over almost the whole of modern France, and stretched eastward through Germany as far as the Saal. His eastern frontier, however, was very indeterminate and fluctuating. In the year 774, by the defeat of Desiderius, he annexed northern Italy to his dominions, and added the famous

* Carl, "a strong man."

iron crown of Lombardy to the one he already wore. By a series of campaigns, extending over a period of thirty years, he subjugated almost the whole of central Europe. In the year 800, being at Rome, he was on Christmas-day kneeling before the high altar of the church of St. Peter, when the pope came behind him, and (as he always averred) unexpectedly placed upon his head a magnificent crown, saying, as he did so, "Hail, Charles Augustus, crowned by the hand of God emperor of the Romans!" He was then invested with the imperial mantle, and, amid the acclamations of the people, led to the throne of the Cæsars, and solemnly installed as successor to those ancient masters of the world. Nicephorus, the emperor of Constantinople, subsequently acknowledged him as emperor of the West, with the title of Augustus, thus consenting, according to the ideas of that age, to divide the empire of the world with him. The line of demarcation between their respective territories seems to have been the river Raab in Hungary, and the mountains of Carniola. Nor were his influence and fame confined to Christendom. Haroun Al Rashid, the caliph of Bagdad, respected, and the Moorish rulers of Spain appealed to, his power. Thus, by the unanimous suffrages of his contemporaries, he was acknowledged as Carolus Magnus—Charles the Great; whilst all succeeding ages have identified greatness with his name—he is known to us, not as Charles, but as Charlemagne.

To fill up this outline with a sketch of his most important achievements, to mark out his position in contemporaneous history, and to trace his influence upon subsequent times, will be the object of the following pages.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLEMAGNE AS A WARRIOR.

Condition and extent of his kingdom on his accession—The Saxons especially dangerous; their character and power—Massacre at Daventer—The Franks take revenge for the outrage—The Lombard war breaks out—Overthrow of the Lombard kingdom—The Saxons break the truce—Second Saxon campaign—The Lombards revolt—Second Lombard campaign—Third Saxon campaign—Spanish affairs—Conquest of the northern provinces of the Peninsula—Battle of Roncesvalles—Eginhardt's summary of the Saxon wars—Military activity of Charlemagne—Comparison with Napoleon—A campaign described by a contemporary chronicler—Statistical table of the principal expeditions of Charlemagne—Analysis of this table—Characteristic peculiarities of these wars—Summary of their results.

CHARLEMAGNE on his accession to the throne found his territory hemmed in by enemies. His frontier was threatened on every point. On the sea-coasts, especially those of the northern provinces, the sea-rovers, or Norsemen, had commenced that career of piracy which ultimately reached even to the shores of Spain and the Mediterranean, made many of the maritime provinces of Britain and France unpeopled wastes, and caused the introduction into the Gallic liturgy of the article, *A furore Normanorum libera nos Domine*—"From the fury of the Northmen deliver us, O Lord."

In the south, the Moors still hung on the slopes of the Pyrenees, burning to avenge the defeat they had received forty years before at the hands of the grandfather of the young king, and eagerly watching for an opportunity to proselytize and pillage France and Germany. But the greatest danger was to be apprehended on the eastern frontier from the still barbarous descendants of those tribes which had overthrown the Roman empire, and their yet more ferocious successors on the remoter north and east—Saxons, Huns, and Avars. Of these, the Saxons were most to be dreaded, because they were the nearest, the most powerful, and, in addition to the ferocity of their manners, were bigoted and fanatical idolaters. Their idolatry, too, was of a peculiarly savage character. It abounded in human sacrifices. Its gods delighted in bloodshed. Almost the only virtue in its moral code was military valour—almost the only vice, cowardice. Teaching the doctrine of immortality, it offered the joys of Valhalla to those only who fell in battle fighting bravely; all who died a natural death were consigned to the dark and gloomy halls of Niflheim. So inflexible was this sentence, that the god Baldur, being accidentally slain at a banquet, could not escape though all the other deities interceded on his behalf. The joys of Valhalla consisted in fighting all day; at nightfall, the wounds received by the combatants miraculously healed, and they spent the night in feasting on the boiled flesh of the boar

Sœhrimnir, which every day was renewed entire. "But what have the heroes to drink?" asked Gangler, "do they drink only water?" "A very silly question that," replied Har; "dost thou imagine that All-Father would invite kings, and jarls, and other great men, and give them nothing to drink but water? In that case, methinks, many of those who had endured the greatest hardships and received deadly wounds in order to obtain access to Valhalla, would find that they had paid too great a price for their water drink, and would complain of their poor entertainment. But the case is quite otherwise—the goat Heidrun stands above Valhalla, and gives from her teats such abundance of mead that the heroes are all filled with it each night."*

All history proves the power of superstition to assimilate its votaries to itself, and testifies to the truth of the psalmist's assertion, when speaking of the gods of the heathen, "They that make them are like unto them." Man elevates his own natural tendencies, embodies them in the persons of his gods, falls down and worships before the deified reflection of his own vices and crimes, and thus sanctions, confirms, and renders intense the devices and desires of his own evil heart. The religion of a people and their prevailing dispositions reciprocally act and react on each other, and combine to form the national character. Thus in the coarse, sensual, and savage creed of the

* The Prose Edda, cap. xxvix.

Saxons, we have an infallible indication of their ferocity and brutality. It becomes us with reverence and gratitude to contrast with this barbarous and barbarizing system, the benign influences of the doctrines of Christianity, so pure, spiritual, and gracious. But for the grace of God, which alone makes us to differ, the cruel and bloody worship of our Saxon ancestors would have been ours. How deep are our obligations to God who has cast our lot in these happier days! God forbid that the woe denounced against Chorazin and Bethsaida should fall upon us, as it assuredly will should we remain negligent of our transcendent privileges!

Whilst the Saxons were thus to be feared from their fierce spirit, as indicated and confirmed by their religious creed, they were yet more to be dreaded from the military strength of their confederation. This arose from two causes. First, their numbers were very considerable, as we may gather from the extent of territory they occupied. It included modern Denmark, Hanover, and all Germany, east of the Saal, and north of Bohemia. This district, it is true, was but thinly peopled, but when we remember that every man was a soldier, and that every soldier deemed death in battle to be the sure and only passport to immortal joy, their military prowess will be evident. A further cause of apprehension was to be found in the fact, that there arose among them at that time many chiefs of ability and influence suffi

cient to unite their otherwise desultory efforts in the pursuit of one common end, and to conduct their enterprises to a successful issue, even when directed against troops more numerous and better disciplined than their own. What Arminius had been to the Germans in their conflict with the Romans on the same territory, that Witikind* and Alboin were to the Saxons in their wars with the Franks.

The presence of such a race in the very centre and heart of Europe, placed in imminent peril the peace and safety of all those countries which had made any progress toward a permanent settlement. A very short march from their own frontiers would bring them to those of Italy or Greece, and involve a repetition of the carnage and desolation wrought by the hordes under Alaric and Attila. Their position was one of special danger to the Franks. Occupying opposite banks of the Saal, the two races, like all uncivilized and half civilized nations, were constantly at war; and whenever a few of the Saxon leaders so far relinquished their intestine feuds as to combine, they could at any time carry their arms into the very heart of the Frank territory.

As it was from this quarter that danger was chiefly to be apprehended, it was to it that the attention of Charlemagne† was first directed.

* That is, Wise Child.

† It may be as well to mention, that we shall throughout speak of him as Charlemagne, that being the name by which he is known in history, though its employment at the early period of his reign involves an anachronism, the epithet Magnus not having been added till many years later.

In the year 772, immediately upon his accession to the sole sovereignty of the Franks, he took measures to destroy the dangerous power of his neighbours. In that year the usual annual muster of the Frankish warriors was held at Worms, to review their military strength and to discuss their projects for the ensuing campaign. There had been a fresh outbreak of bigotry and ferocity on the part of the Saxons in the previous winter. Libuinus, a pious and devoted missionary among them, had succeeded in gathering around him a band of converts, and in erecting a church at Daventer. The invariable results of the introduction of Christianity had followed. Savage warriors were reclaimed from their fierce and brutal pursuits and pleasures ; and under the influence of their peaceful industry, the desert and the solitary place were glad, and the wilderness rejoiced and blossomed as a rose. Upon this little garden in the desert the pagan Saxons had burst, burned the church, slaughtered the converts, and only allowed the missionary to escape with life, at the intercession of an old man, who argued that since he came as ambassador from the King of heaven, he ought to enjoy impunity. Charlemagne availed himself of this outrage to excite afresh the old national feud. He had no difficulty in persuading the Franks to consider the massacre of their fellow-Christians as a provocation which it behoved them to avenge, and marching at the head of his troops into the Saxon territory, routed the

enemy in their stronghold at Ehresburg, destroyed the temple and idol of Hermansaul, and having devastated the surrounding country, bore back in triumph to France a vast treasure of gold and silver. The Saxons, terrified at this sudden blow, gave hostages to the conqueror, and consented to the establishment of strong military posts throughout their territory.

Charlemagne was probably the more disposed to grant peace to the Saxons, from the fact that he had received the most urgent entreaties from pope Adrian I. to rescue Rome from the hands of the Lombards. Apart from all considerations of policy, there were many personal reasons which induced him to lend a favourable ear to the papal entreaties. It will be remembered that the widow and orphans of Carloman took refuge at the court of Desiderius, the Lombard monarch, who not only afforded them shelter, but now warmly espoused their cause, and demanded that the dominions of the deceased king should be restored to them. A still more private and personal cause of rupture existed in the fact that Charlemagne, having espoused a daughter of Desiderius, had divorced her at the command of the pope. Notwithstanding these grounds of quarrel, Charlemagne attempted negotiation, and even offered a sum of money as the price of peace. To this he was probably led by the disinclination of his subjects to engage in Italian wars, and by the danger still to be apprehended on the Saxon frontier, which rendered him unwilling to lead

his troops so far from home. But Desiderius, despising the youth and inexperience of his opponent, and trusting in his ability to defend the passes of the Alps which he had seized, refused to listen to the proposed terms.

Charlemagne appointed Geneva as the place of meeting for the annual muster of the Franks in the spring of 773, and there it was determined to march for the defence of the pope. The army was divided into two bodies, one, commanded by the king, taking the route across Mont Cenis; the other, under his uncle Bernard, that across Mount Joux, now known as Mount St. Bernard.* Both succeeded in forcing the Alpine passes, and thenceforward the career of conquest was easy and uninterrupted. The open country was soon overrun, and Milan, Verona, and Pavia, were in turn reduced. Desiderius, being taken prisoner, was despatched into France, where he received the tonsure, and was admitted as a monk into the monastery of Corvey.

The return of Charlemagne from Italy was accelerated by intelligence that the Saxons had taken advantage of his absence to break out into revolt (A.D. 774.) They had succeeded in surprising and putting to the sword the garrison he had left at Ehresburg, had destroyed most of the strongholds he had established in their territory, had made a successful inroad into his dominions, and had returned laden with spoil.

* Possibly from this circumstance, though more probably from the hospice upon it, dedicated to St. Bernard.

Scarcely had he been able to suppress this outbreak, when he was summoned to Italy to quell an insurrection of the Lombards, who were again up in arms, headed by Adalgis, the son of the dethroned monarch, and supported by the Greek emperor. This occupied the year 775, and whilst absent in Italy the Saxons broke out afresh. He summoned his army to meet him at Worms in May, 776, led them into Saxony, and again compelled the insurgent tribes to sue for peace. His presence and interference were now demanded in the affairs of Spain. Abd'alrahman, the sole survivor of the Ommiade dynasty, having escaped to that country, was there acknowledged by the Moors as their caliph, in opposition to the Abbasside race, who had assumed the caliphate at Bagdad. This schism in the Mohammedan body was not, however, concurred in by the chiefs of the northern provinces, and Ibn al'Arabi, lord of Saragossa, solicited the aid of the Franks against the Ommiades. Charlemagne, remembering the danger with which the Mohammedan power had so recently threatened Europe, eagerly availed himself of this opportunity of gaining an influence in the affairs of Spain. He led two armies across the Pyrenees in the spring of 778, and having conquered the whole country north of the Ebro, established in each district of it governors who were willing to take an oath of allegiance and fidelity to himself. By thus introducing rivalry among the Moorish chiefs, he dissolved that unity which was still fraught

with so much danger to Christendom ; while, by establishing his supremacy over their northern provinces, he secured the safety of his own southern possessions. Any further enterprises in this quarter were forbidden, however, by the indomitable Saxons, who were again in rebellion under their heroic leader Witikind.

It was as Charlemagne was hastening from Spain to crush this new insurrection that he fought the battle of Roncevalles, so famous among the romance writers of the middle ages, and so strangely perverted by them. Stripped of its fictitious adornments, the true history of the battle appears to be as follows:—The Christians of the Pyrenees, who were more jealous of their Frank than of their Mohammedan neighbours, together with some of the Saracen chiefs, concerted an attack upon the retiring army as it repassed their mountains. An ambuscade was formed in the dense forests which clothe the steep and rugged rocks through which the valley of Roncevalles winds. The main body, commanded by the king in person, was allowed to pass unassailed ; but when the rear-guard, in charge of the baggage, and under the command of the gallant Rutland, or Roland, or Orlando, as the name is variously spelt, were toiling up the narrow and tortuous defile, the mountaineers rushed upon them from their concealed fastnesses. The Franks made a desperate, but vain resistance. They were slain almost to a man, the baggage was plundered, and the assailants dispersed with the spoil to

their mountain strongholds, before even the tidings of the attack could reach the king. When he did hear of what had happened, he at once retraced his steps, but it was too late. Pursuit was impossible. He therefore contented himself with erecting a chapel and monuments to the memory of the slain, and passed on to wipe out his disgrace by new victories over the Saxons.

“The war which Charlemagne then commenced against the Saxons,” says his secretary and biographer Eginhardt, “was the longest and most cruel which he ever undertook, and that which most fatigued his people. For the Saxons were of a ferocious disposition, and addicted to the worship of devils. Enemies of our religion, they did not deem it wrong to violate the laws of God or the rights of man. Other causes besides disturbed the peace each day. Our frontiers and theirs joined; hence we were constantly exposed to carnage and plunder at their hands. A war, therefore, began which lasted thirty-three years. It would have been finished sooner but for the perfidy of the Saxons. We cannot say how often they were vanquished, or how often they submitted. Often they promised to abandon the worship of devils and submit to Christianity, but they apostatized again as soon as they had an opportunity. In fact, there was scarcely a year which did not prove their fickleness and perversity. But the magnanimity of the king, and his constancy in good and in bad fortune, could

never be vanquished. He never left their outrages or their perfidy unpunished, however often renewed. Finally, having defeated all who were in the habit of resisting him, having reduced them into submission, and having transported ten thousand families from the most turbulent district into the heart of his own territory, he terminated a war which had continued so many years. The Saxons renounced the worship of demons and the rites of their forefathers ; they embraced the Christian faith, and being mixed with the Franks, became only one people."*

Thus was the whole mature life of Charlemagne spent. His reign was but one continuous and protracted campaign. He seemed to his enemies to be endowed with ubiquity. Now fighting the Saxons in their hitherto inaccessible fastnesses ; then flying to the Pyrenees, or to the islands of the Mediterranean, to meet a Moorish invader ; then in Italy, repressing an insurrection of the Lombards, or rescuing Rome from their attacks, or defending Naples against the Arabs ; anon storming the ring fortresses of Huns and Avars, or crushing a Bavarian revolt, or mustering his troops on the coast to repel an incursion of the Scandinavian pirates. In this rapidity of military movements, and in the energy and success with which he conducted his campaigns, we are forcibly reminded of that modern conqueror, who, a thousand years later, carried the devastations of war over the

* *Vita Caroli Magni.*

same region, who loved to compare himself with the hero of these pages, and was styled by his flatterers, "the Charlemagne of the nineteenth century." This analogy between Napoleon and Charlemagne applies, not only to their activity and achievements as warriors, but to numerous other events of their history, and points in their character; their legislative efforts, their patronage of art and learning, their simplicity of dress, their personal superintendence of the minutest affairs of their vast domains, and the fate of their respective empires. We point out the parallel thus early that our readers may trace it for themselves as they proceed.

To narrate in detail the military achievements of Charlemagne, or even to glance at the history of each of his campaigns, would be a tedious and painful task, and could serve no useful purpose, except it were to excite our gratitude to God that he has "sent peace in our time," that he has for so many ages averted the frightful scourge of military invasion from our own shores, and that even the horrors of war have been *in some measure* mitigated by the indirect influence of Christianity. Instead, therefore, of tracing out this career of bloodshed, we shall condense from a contemporary chronicler the narrative of one of the campaigns of that age, so as to illustrate the character and conduct of these wars, and shall then give a summary of the whole in a tabulated form.

The narrative selected as being at once the

briefest and most characteristic, is that of a war between the Franks and Bretons, related by Ermoldus Nigellus. The events described occurred indeed four years after the death of Charlemagne, but are not the less fitted for our purpose.

The chronicler relates the accession of Louis, or Hluto-wigh, as he calls him, on the death of his father, and the summons to court, according to ancient custom, of the various chiefs stationed on the frontiers. Amongst those who came was Lande-Bert, whose post was on the Breton frontier. "Well Frank," said the king to him, "tell me what is the nation near thee doing. Does it honour God and the holy church? Does it obey its king and leave my territories in peace?" Then Lande-Bert bowed and replied, "It is an accursed and malicious race; Christian only in name, for it has neither faith nor works. Their king's name is Murman, but he governs his people very badly. They often attack and cross our boundaries, but they never get home again without being the worse for it." "Lande-Bert," answered the king, "what you say sounds very strangely. I perceive that I must punish them; yet, before marching against them, I must send them a message, more especially as their chief has received the holy sacrament of baptism. Wither* shall go to him from me." Wither, an abbot, very wise and prudent in business, mounts on horseback immediately, and rides, without

* Wit-Her, "wise and noble."

stopping, by the shortest ways, for he knew the country. Presently he reached Murman's house, which was situated between a thick forest and a river, and was very strongly fortified by hedges and ditches. "I salute you, Murman," said Wither. "And I you," replied Murman, and, as usual, gave him a kiss. They then sat down at a good distance from one another, and Wither delivered his message. The Breton listened, with his eyes fixed on the ground, whilst the adroit messenger endeavoured to prevail upon him to yield, using for that purpose promises, entreaties, and threats, when suddenly the wife of Murman, a haughty and insidious woman, entered. She had just left her bed, and, according to custom, brought the first kiss to her husband. Having embraced him, she turned contemptuously to the Frank and said, "King of the Bretons, who is this stranger? What does he here?" Murman replied, "His business concerns men; woman, go in peace to thy own affairs;" and he then requested that he might be allowed the night for reflection.

At break of day, Wither presented himself at the door of the chief's apartment to demand an answer. Murman, in a voice broken with sleep and wine, said, "Tell thy king that I do not inhabit his territory, and do not want his laws; I refuse to pay tribute, and I defy his power." "Listen, Murman," said the sage Wither; "our ancestors always said thy race was fickle and inconstant, and now I see it was with reason, for the prattle of a foolish woman

has unsettled thy mind. We shall come against thee with thousands of troops, and neither thy marshes, thy forests, nor thy ditches, will be able to protect thee."

Wither comes back in haste with his answer. The king instantly commands arms and ammunition to be prepared, and his troops to assemble in the town of Vannes. The Franks, the Suabians, the Saxons, the Thuringians, the Burgundians, all come thither, equipped for war, and the king himself arrives, after visiting the holy places in his road, and receiving presents to enrich his treasury. The trumpet gives the signal, and the soldiers pass the frontier. They carry off the flocks, hunt the men through their forests and marshes, burn the houses, and spare nothing but the churches. The Bretons, defeated and dispersed, dare no longer meet them in the open plain, but perfidiously kill them from ambushes and in narrow and dangerous defiles. Meanwhile Murman determines himself to go and meet the invaders; he takes a javelin in each hand, springs upon his horse, drains, according to the custom of his country, a goblet of wine, embraces his wife and children and servants, and departs, saying, "If I can meet that king I will pay him what he demands of me; I will pay him tribute with iron." He and his troop soon fall in with a party of Franks, headed by a man named Kosel, and, according to their national tactics, assail it in front, flank, and rear, hastily retreat, and then return to the

charge. Murman singles out Kosel, drives his horse against him, and cries out, "Frank, shall I make thee a present? Here is one I have kept for thee; take it and remember me." Saying these words, he hurled his javelin against Kosel, who awaited it without fear, warded it off with his buckler, and replied, "Breton, I have received thy present, take this in return." Then, spurring his horse, he strikes the temples of Murman, not with a light javelin, but with the heavy lance which the Franks carry. It pierces the chief's iron helmet, and, with a single blow, fells him to the earth. The Frank then jumps from his horse and cuts off the head of his enemy, but as he is doing so a companion of Murman's strikes him in the back, and he perishes in the moment of victory. The report soon spreads that the head of the Breton chief is brought into the camp, and the Franks flock to see it. They take it to Wither, that he may recognise it. He washes the blood from the face, combs the hair, and declares it to be that of Murman. The Bretons then submitted to the king, promised to attend to his commands, and he thereupon left them in peace.*

The difference between these Carlovingian campaigns and those of modern times becomes evident as we read this curious narrative. They were not contests between disciplined and organized masses, but a series of individual fights, of single combats, and forcibly remind

* Abridged from "*Dix Ans d'Etudes Historiques.*" Par M. Aug. Thierry.

us of the Homeric battles. The qualities demanded of a military chieftain were just such as the Iliad celebrates in its heroes—personal strength, activity, and courage, skill in all athletic exercises, and ability to endure the hardships and brave the perils of a soldier's life, were deemed even more essential than that strategic skill which now constitutes the great and almost sole excellence of a commander. When we come to speak of the personal history of Charlemagne, we shall find abundant proofs of his possession of these qualities in an extraordinary degree.

The following statistical table, extracted from Guizot's History of Civilization in France, will give an idea of the number and frequency of his campaigns :—

TABLE OF THE PRINCIPAL EXPEDITIONS OF
CHARLEMAGNE.

No.	Date.	Enemies.	Observations.
1	769	Against the Aquitani	He goes to the Dordogne.
2	772	„ the Saxons	He goes beyond the Weser.
3	773	„ the Lombards	He goes to Pavia and Verona.
4	774	„ Idem	He takes Pavia and visits Rome.
5	774	„ the Saxons	
6	775	„ Idem	
7	776	„ the Lombards	He goes to Treviso.
8	776	„ the Saxons	He goes to the sources of the Lippe.
9	778	„ the Arabs in Spain	He goes to Saragossa.
10	778	„ the Saxons	
11	779	„ Idem	He goes to Osnabruck.
12	780	„ Idem	He goes to the Elbe.
13	782	„ Idem	He goes to the confluence of the Weser and Aller.

EXPEDITIONS OF CHARLEMAGNE (*continued.*)

No.	Date.	Enemies.	Observations.
14	783	Against the Saxons	He goes to the Elbe.
15	784	„ Idem	He goes to the Saal and the Elbe.
16	785	„ Idem	He goes to the Elbe.
17	785	„ the Thuringians	
18	786	„ the Bretons	
19	787	„ the Lombards	He goes to Capua.
20	787	„ the Bavarians	He goes to Augsburg.
21	788	„ the Huns or Avars	He goes to Ratisbon.
22	789	„ the Slaves	He goes between the Elbe and the Oder.
23	791	„ the Huns	He goes to the confluence of the Danube and the Raab.
24	794	„ the Saxons	
25	795	„ Idem	
26	796	„ Idem	
27	796	„ the Huns	Under the orders of his son Louis.
28	796	„ the Arabs	Under the orders of his son Pepin.
29	797	„ the Saxons	He goes to the Weser and Elbe.
30	797	„ the Arabs	By his son Louis.
31	798	„ the Saxons	He goes beyond the Elbe.
32	801	„ the Lombards	By his son Pepin to Chieti.
33	801	„ the Arabs of Spain	By his son Louis to Barcelona.
34	802	„ the Saxons	By his sons beyond the Elbe.
35	804	„ Idem	He goes beyond the Elbe.
36	805	„ the Slaves	By his son Charles.
37	806	„ Idem	By his son Charles.
38	806	„ the Saracens of Corsica	By his son Pepin.
39	806	„ the Arabs of Spain	By his son Louis.
40	807	„ the Saracens of Corsica	By his generals.
41	807	„ the Arabs of Spain	Idem.
42	808	„ the Danes and Northmen	

EXPEDITIONS OF CHARLEMAGNE (*continued.*)

No.	Date.	Enemies.	Observations.
43	809	Against the Greeks	In Dalmatia, by his son Pepin.
44	809	„ the Arabs of Spain	Idem.
45	810	„ the Greeks	
46	810	„ the Saracens in Corsica and Sardinia	
47	810	„ the Danes	He goes in person to the Weser and Aller.
48	811	„ Idem	He goes between the Elbe and the Oder.
49	811	„ the Avars	
50	811	„ the Bretons	
51	812	„ the Slaves	
52	812	„ the Saracens in Corsica	
53	813	„ Idem *	

An analysis of this list gives the following results :—

Against the barbarous tribes settled in central Europe, including Saxons, Huns, Avars, Slaves, and Danes	31
Against the Mohammedans of Spain, Italy, and the Mediterranean	12
Against the Lombards	5
Against the Bretons and Aquitani	3
Against the Greeks	2
In all	53

From this list are omitted various unimportant expeditions incidentally alluded to, but of which no distinct record remains ; and those numerous intestine strifes among the Franks themselves, when the monarch had to repress anarchy, to punish disobedience, or to crush insurrection ;

* Guizot's Lectures on the History of Civilization in France. Twentieth Lecture.

yet we must bear these in mind if we would adequately estimate the ceaseless activity and indomitable energy of Charlemagne.

The characteristic peculiarities of the wars of Charlemagne become evident as we thus present the record in a tabulated form. They were not mere feuds, carried on by tribe against tribe, as the contests of his predecessors had been; nor were they waged by nation against nation from motives of personal ambition and aggrandizement. They were, for the most part, directed against those hordes who had effected a settlement in the heart of Europe, who still continued as barbarous as their ancestors, and who, like them, were ready at any moment to pour down upon the more settled and peaceful districts, and in a moment undo all that had been done toward the establishment of civilization and order. They were virtually defensive wars, waged for the protection of the inseparably associated interests of civilization and Christianity, against the inroads of Mohammedan fanaticism on the one hand, and pagan barbarism on the other. This fact, together with the small advances in civilization which even the conquerors had made, form the best apology which can be offered for the long and bloody campaigns in which Charlemagne was incessantly engaged.

Whilst the Christian historian cannot but abhor the spirit and condemn the practice of war, yet candour compels us to confess that in manifold instances this terrible evil has been

made to work out good results. God has made even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he has restrained. Thus the wars of Charlemagne, though bloody in their course, and disastrous in their immediate influence, did yet, under God's overruling providence, work out the following beneficial results for Europe.

1. They at once and permanently prevented any further barbarian inroad. Up to the time of Charlemagne, on the outskirts of the old Roman empire, and even within its boundaries, were vast wandering hordes of barbarians, only waiting some opportunity to follow in the path marked out by their ancestors, and precipitate themselves like an avalanche on the peaceful and settled provinces. Charlemagne, by his victories, erected a barrier against any future inroads. He compelled the Arabs, the Saxons, the Huns, and the Lombards, to remain within their own limits, and attempt no more expeditions into the territories of their peaceful neighbours. He thus gave to the nations of Europe those two grand requisites to all progress—peace and security.

2. The victories of Charlemagne compelled the conquered barbarians themselves to cultivate the arts of peace. They had previously held all industrial pursuits in contempt. They lived solely for war and the chase. But when forced to abandon their predatory habits, and remain quietly within their own boundaries, they began to devote themselves to the pursuits

of peace and civilization. Thus, Saxony, which through an entire generation was year after year laid waste by fire and sword, its towns being pillaged and burned, while its inhabitants were borne off into captivity, or ruthlessly put to the sword, very soon repaired these ravages after it began to enjoy the blessings of national repose and tranquil industry. It speedily ceased to be a region of barren heaths, impassable morasses, and dense forests, inhabited only by wild beasts, and men scarcely less ferocious. Before a century had passed away, it had outstripped France in the race of improvement, and surpassed it in wealth and plenty. Nor was the progress of the Saxons and other conquered tribes confined to mere material civilization. In the higher concerns of morals and religion, they advanced with at least equal strides. However reluctant they were to receive Christianity, yet having accepted it, they, like their brethren in England, submitted much more fully to its influence than those nations whose conversion, using that term in the qualified sense before explained, had been more speedy and more superficial. We have a pleasing illustration of this in the religious literature which at once sprang up among them. Numerous hymns and religious poems were composed in their vernacular tongue. At least two poetical versions of the Gospels were made; and it seems probable that, in addition to these, there was a metrical paraphrase of the whole Bible, since we read that "Louis commanded a certain Saxon, who

was deemed by his own nation to be no ignoble bard,* to attempt a poetical version of the Old and New Testament in the German language, so that the inspired records and Divine precepts might lie open, not to the learned only, but also to the unlearned. He, gladly complying with the command, at once addressed himself to the arduous task. Beginning with the creation of the world, and compendiously summing up whatever was most excellent in the history, and dexterously introducing its spiritual meaning, he completed a poetical version of the whole Bible, distinguished alike by grace and eloquence." Happy had it been for Europe and for the world if this zeal for the translation and diffusion of the Scriptures had always prevailed! Happy will it be for us and for the nations of the east, if our wars there, too often, like those of Charlemagne, unjust in design and cruel in execution, have a like result; and if historians in after ages, as they narrate our victories, shall have to point out, that whilst we subjugated the millions of India to our sway, we gave them that truth which made them "free indeed!"

3. These wars and victories fused down into national unity those heterogeneous mixtures of

* "*Haud ignobilis vates.*" Among the Teutonic nations,
"The sacred name
Of poet and of prophet was the same."

The Druid and the Bard were identical. We may hence conclude that this "vates" was a converted priest of the old mythology, and that these Christian songs were written by him to supersede the pagan chants which we know to have been previously in use, and of which relics yet remain in many of our popular legends and nursery rhymes.

tribes and races who peopled the same districts without amalgamating with one another. For four hundred years, hordes of barbarians, differing in origin, manners, and language, had been poured into southern and central Europe. From the remote north, where our Scandinavian ancestors saw the sun set for a long night of months, from the steppes of Tartary, from the borders of China, impelled by some strange impulse, they pressed onward; those in the rear crowding upon those in advance, and forbidding them to retreat, though decimated by the swords of the legions, and the yet more fatal luxuries of the south. Each of these hordes, though thinned, and many of them almost annihilated, left some vestiges of their former countless numbers scattered over the face of Europe, and dwelling side by side with the relics of the old Roman population; just as a fertile district, swept over by successive floods, retains at once the traces of its former fertility, and the debris deposited by each inundation. These various races had done little or nothing towards amalgamation. Each retained its distinctive manners, customs, laws, and language. The inhabitants of neighbouring, and even of the same villages, were often unable to understand one another's language; and that which was regarded as sacred by one family, was looked on with detestation by the next. Hence arose incessant intestine feuds, race contending with race in wild disorder. They needed to be fused down into national unity, when the product, like Corin-

thian brass, would be all the richer from the variety and diversity of its constituent elements. This the wars and victories of Charlemagne effected, to a considerable extent, both for the conquerors and the conquered. The great enterprises in which they were engaged, and the important interests at stake, led both parties, for the time at least, to merge their differences; fidelity to their chiefs and to one another, in the camp and on the field, formed a bond of union which previously had no existence. Europe ceasing to be the battle-field and hunting-ground of hostile or loosely associated tribes, became the home of distinct and well-compacted nations, as we see it at the present day.

Thus, then, notwithstanding the frightful devastation and carnage which attended many of the campaigns of Charlemagne, their ultimate results were in these respects greatly and decidedly beneficial. Like the thunderstorm, which may scathe and blast the mountain side, and leave traces of its desolating progress in blighted verdure and shivered homesteads, but whose continuance is as brief as it is violent, while it is followed by greener verdure and brighter skies—so did the storm and fury of the Carlovingian wars pass away, having carried off many of the elements of disorder, and prepared for the calm and genial influences of peace in after ages.

In making these admissions, we need not, in the slightest degree, abate our abhorrence of

war, but only discover another indication of God in history—only see another proof that verily there is a “God that judgeth in the earth,” who permits partial evil that from it he may elicit greater good, and who, from the fierce and selfish passions of barbarous wars, works out his designs of beneficence and love. May he long preserve *us* from a recurrence of those wars of cruelty and ambition which have been at once the scourge and disgrace of Christendom, and hasten the dawning of that blissful day, when men “shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks ;” when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” By the peaceful labours of the missionary in New Zealand and similar localities, the world has had a lesson taught to it, that there is “a more excellent way” than the sword to mitigate the ferociousness of savage tribes, and proof has been afforded that the gospel faithfully dispensed carries with it a healing and assuaging influence, more potent in its results than even the victorious arms of Charlemagne.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLEMAGNE AS A LEGISLATOR.

Necessity of guarding against the errors suggested by the names we use in historical investigations—State of the law on the accession of Charlemagne—His determination to reform it—*The legislative assembly*—The reorganization of the Champs de Mai—Its character, constitution, and labours—*The legislation*—Its heterogeneous character—Moral precepts—Penal enactments—The Wehr—The ordeal and judicial combat—The law of sanctuary—Ecclesiastical legislation—Provides for the formation of an educated ministry, and insists upon the faithful preaching of the gospel—Influence of Alcuin on this part of his legislation—Social legislation—Inquiry into the merits of this code—*Administration and execution of the laws*—Judicial activity of Charlemagne himself—Governors of provinces—Elevation of ecclesiastics to these posts—Motives and results of this—Missi Dominici—Report of Theodulf and Leidrade on the administration of law in the provinces—Copies of instructions given to Missi—Characteristic peculiarities and merits of the legislative system of Charlemagne.

THE tyranny exercised over us, and the illusions practised upon us by the words which we use, have been remarked by many writers. "We suppose," says Bacon, "that we command and control our words, whereas it not unfrequently happens that they command and control us." We use a word to describe some object, and it serves our purpose exactly and precisely. When we wish to speak of something which is similar, but not identical, we are compelled,

from the poverty of language and the paucity of words, to apply to it the same name, to speak of it in the same terms. It is impossible for us so to multiply words as to define precisely our various shades of meaning. Hence arises a fruitful source of fallacy and mistake; for by using the same names in speaking of various objects, their points of similarity only are brought before the mind, whilst their points of difference are left out of sight and are apt to be forgotten."

In nothing is this more true than in historical investigations. We employ some phrase to describe a distinct and definite idea or institution of our own times. When we wish to speak of the ideas and institutions of past ages, and of other states of society, we are compelled to use the same terms, though we are describing something very different. Thus we speak of monarchy, a king, the kingly power; and by this we in the present day mean a fixed and settled government, administered by an individual whose authority is fortified by prerogative and restrained within constitutional limits, these mutual prerogatives and limitations being strictly defined and recognised both by the ruler and the subjects. When we speak of government and legislation among the Franks, we are compelled to employ the same terms, and in transferring the words we can scarcely avoid transferring with them their present meaning. But the words king and monarchy expressed very different ideas and very different facts

then and now. There was nothing in existence among the Franks analogous to what we, in the present day, mean by those names. The royal power was little more than a military chieftainship. In the rare intervals of peace, the monarch's authority depended, not on any prescriptive and admitted right, but on his own personal character and influence, varying with these from absolute despotism to utter powerlessness. The imbecility of the predecessors of Pepin had reduced the royal power to its lowest possible point, all the functions of government had fallen into disorder, and anarchy prevailed in every department of the state. The language of a modern historian is scarcely exaggerated, who says: "The monarchy was left without any regular establishment of justice, of arms, or of revenue. The successors of Clovis wanted resolution to assume and strength to exercise the legislative or executive powers. Among the people, the love of freedom was reduced to a contempt of order and the desire of impunity." This description is amply borne out by the words of Gregory of Tours: "No one any longer fears or respects his king, his chief, or his count. Each man loves to do evil, and freely indulges his desires. The most gentle correction provokes an immediate tumult, and the magistrate who presumes to censure or restrain his subjects seldom escapes from them alive."

Whilst if the executive functions of the government had become thus disorganized, its legislation was in a condition scarcely less anarchical.

Charlemagne, on his accession to the throne, found the Franks as little disposed to acknowledge his authority to enact laws, as they were to yield obedience to the magistrates in the execution of them. The legislative assembly common to the Franks with the other Germanic nations, had fallen into disuse since their settlement in Gaul, and no other political institution had taken its place. As a consequence of this, neither the king nor any one else was regarded as having authority to make laws binding on the nation. Nor was this all. Each tribe as it settled in Gaul had transplanted thither its own code, which it retained unaltered, though its enactments were utterly unsuited to its new mode of life, and at variance with the usages of its neighbours. At least five such contradictory and inconsistent codes are known to have been in operation in France at the same time, namely, the Salic, the Ripuarian, the Gothic, the Burgundian, and the Roman. "So great is the diversity of the laws," writes Agobard, "that not only does it exist in the same province, or in the same city, but even in the same household. For it often happens, that if five men meet on a journey, or in a house, no one of them has a law in common with the others." Nor did the confusion stop even here. Most of these codes being handed down by tradition, or reduced to writing in different places at different times, the various enactments of each became so corrupted and altered, that the copies of professedly the same law differed as

widely from one another, as they did from those of other nations.

It was to a government thus anarchical that Charlemagne succeeded. It will therefore behove us to be on our guard against the error into which so many historical inquirers have fallen, of being deceived by the ambiguities of language, and thus being led to measure his policy by rules only applicable to times like our own.

The repression of such universal anarchy, and reconstruction of society when so utterly disorganized, might have seemed a hopeless enterprise even to one who could devote to the task the uninterrupted energies of a lifetime. What, then, must we think of the prodigious energy of him who, spending his whole mature life in the camp, yet attempted this and succeeded? In tracing out the career of Charlemagne as a lawgiver, our best and simplest course will be—first, to describe the legislative body of his times, and its mode of procedure; secondly, to give some account of the legislation itself; and thirdly, to consider the execution and administration of the laws which it enacted.

The legislative council consisted of that annual muster of the Frankish warriors to which frequent reference has been made in the preceding chapters, and seems to have been the source from which the representative institutions of modern Europe originated. In their native forests, as we learn from Tacitus, all the German tribes had such assemblies, where all

matters of importance were discussed and decided upon. The whole of the warriors assembled fully armed ; the chiefs only, however, had the privilege of speaking ; the others expressing their assent or dissent to what was said by shouts, and by striking their swords upon their shields. Very soon after the settlement of the Franks in Gaul, this assembly lost much of its deliberative and legislative character, and came to be merely a military muster at the opening of each campaign. Its original time of meeting was in the early part of March, and was accompanied with various superstitious and idolatrous rites, which continued to be practised after the nominal conversion of the nation to Christianity, and even down to the time of Pepin. On the coronation of that monarch by Boniface, the latter induced the Franks to abandon these relics of their old paganism as unbecoming a Christian people ; and that he might do away with the idolatrous associations arising out of the period of the year, caused the time of meeting to be changed from March to May. As the assembly met in the open air, it was called from that circumstance, as well as from the month in which it assembled, the Champ de Mars, or de Mai.

Charlemagne perceived, that if he could restore the Champ de Mai from the neglect into which it had fallen, it would be exactly adapted to his purpose as a deliberative council. Within a few months of his accession to

the throne, therefore, (in May, 769,) he ordered that it should meet regularly twice every year, and that all persons should attend or be fined for absence. A very interesting description of its constitution and mode of procedure was drawn up by Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, in the year 882, for the guidance of Carloman, son of Louis the Stammerer. The following account of the character and constitution of this assembly, as it was organized by Charlemagne, is for the most part condensed from the narrative of the prelate just named. Two councils met every year, the time and place of their meeting being determined by the emperor. The spot fixed upon was generally some spacious plain where the whole army might assemble. If the weather proved favourable, the deliberations were conducted in the open air; if unfavourable, temporary buildings were erected for the purpose. Though the entire nation had the privilege of being present, yet, as in the ancient times, the chiefs only consulted. The place assigned for the meeting of the chiefs was divided into two parts, one of which was occupied by the ecclesiastical, the other by the secular and military leaders, so that each could meet and discuss their affairs without the presence of the other. They might, however, deliberate in common if they chose, and they very frequently did so. The king did not meet with them unless they specially wished it, but held his court at a little distance, hearing reports from his envoys as to the administration of the laws,

the state of the provinces, the condition of the royal domains, inquiring into the disposition of the tribes on the frontier, receiving ambassadors from foreign courts, and mingling freely and familiarly with all classes. Not only were the people permitted to come and speak to the king without reserve, but they were strictly enjoined to do so, and tell him anything which they had observed of importance either within or without the kingdom. In particular, the king wished to be informed, whether in any part of the kingdom the people murmured and were discontented, and if so, from what cause; whether any of the subdued nations gave signs of insubordination, whether any of those who had previously done so now seemed disposed to submit, or whether any of the independent tribes were threatening to attack any part of his dominions. These things his people were recommended to learn from friends and foes alike, and freely to communicate whatever they could gather. Though the king, as we have just said, was not present in the assemblies except when special circumstances rendered his presence desirable, he still controlled and regulated all that passed there, for messengers were continually going to and fro between himself and the council, communicating to the chiefs the matters on which the king wished their advice, and carrying back to him their opinions when they had sufficiently considered the questions proposed to them. The result of their deliberations having been laid before the great prince, he then, with the

wisdom which God gave him, adopted a resolution which all obeyed.

Everything thus emanated from the king, and was determined by him. Charlemagne himself fills the scene; he is the centre and soul of all things; it is he who says that the assemblies shall meet, and that they shall deliberate; it is he who occupies himself with the state of the country, who proposes and sanctions laws; in him reside the energy and impulse of the legislature; it is from him that all things emanate, and to him that all things return.*

The places at which the assemblies were summoned to meet afford a very striking illustration of Charlemagne's ceaseless activity. Amongst those enumerated by his chroniclers we find Worms, Valenciennes, Geneva, Ehresburg, the sources of the Lippe, Ratisbon, Frankfort, and Boulogne. Not only are these places widely distant from one another, but many of them are in the very heart of the Saxon territory, and most of them in districts where, at the time of meeting, military operations were being carried on.

Such being the constitution and character of the legislative body, we proceed to a consideration of the legislation itself. This it is proposed to treat of at some length, because, though of less general interest than many other parts of the history of the period, yet nothing else gives

* Guizot's *Lectures on the History of Civilization in France*. Lect. xx.

us so adequate an idea of the character of the age, and so accurate an acquaintance with the disposition and feelings of the subject of our sketch. The monarch will be found expressing, in his own words, his judgment of the men and things of his time. As in the clear waters of a lake we see in a single glance the weeds and pebbles of the lake itself, together with the shadows of the surrounding banks and trees, so in the laws of Charlemagne we perceive distinctly reflected the mind of the man and the manners of the age.

In attempting to give an account of the legislative labours of this illustrious individual within the narrow limits of this volume, much difficulty arises from their vast extent and extremely miscellaneous character. The limits of governmental control were unmarked. It was supposed that the king must regulate everything, must provide for everything, must legislate upon every case that arose. Hence the private conduct of individuals, the manner in which they should worship God, the mode in which they should manage their affairs, their morals, their religion, their agriculture, their commerce, all come within the range of the monarch's legislative diligence. And hence, though the larger portion of the proceedings of the assemblies has been lost to us, yet no fewer than 1,150 distinct capitula* have come down

* So called from *capitulum*, "a little chapter," as they consist of detached decrees or judgments, very brief, and each providing for a single case. A collection of capitula is called a capitulary.

to our times as relics and proofs of the prodigious activity and energy of this extraordinary man. This, whilst it renders any clear or complete classification impossible, yet greatly increases their value as a picture of the age. Adopting, with some modifications, the arrangement of M. Guizot, we shall first give some examples of those moral precepts which, in a strict sense, cannot be called laws, but rather counsel and advice; we shall then consider Charlemagne's penal, ecclesiastical, and social legislation.

Of the first class—moral counsels and precepts—the following will afford fair specimens:—

“It is necessary that every man should, to the best of his ability and strength, endeavour to serve God and walk in the way of his commandments, for the lord emperor cannot watch over every person with the necessary care, and keep every person in his proper place.” (Capitulary of the year 802.)

“Avarice consists in desiring the possessions of others, and in not being willing to give to others a share of what we ourselves possess. According to the apostle, it is the root of all evil. It should therefore be most carefully guarded against.” (806.)

These enactments clearly show that the idea present to the legislator's mind was that he was responsible for the personal morality and private conduct of each individual.

Similar in spirit to the foregoing are the two following:—“Let all men practise hospitality.”—

"Those who are determined to become rich are likely to make dishonourable gains." (789, 794.)

"Let more attention be paid to the promotion of religion than to the decoration of churches; for although it is a good thing that churches should be beautiful edifices, yet virtue forms their best crown and ornament. It seems to us that the building of handsome churches pertains rather to the old dispensation, while the improvement of the character and life is the more peculiar work of the New Testament and the Christian dispensation." (Capitulary of the year 811.)

"There are certain persons so superstitious that they appeal to sorcerers and conjurers, and are particular about the days and times, and hang amulets and spells about their necks. We do not know what Scriptural warrant they have for acting thus." "Whatever a man does, let him do it in the name of the Lord." (814.)

Such exhortations as these are very frequent. Many similar will appear under the head of ecclesiastical legislation. While they show the sound vigorous sense of the emperor and his councillors, they yet indicate clearly enough how very confused and imperfect were their ideas of the province of the legislator, and the limits within which he can act.

We pass on to a consideration of the penal legislation of Charlemagne. Against this a charge of cruelty has been brought. The only part of it which lies open to this reproach con-

sists of the laws by which death is denounced as the penalty to those Saxons who refuse to receive baptism, or who relapse into idolatry after it. That these enactments were of a cruel, and almost of a ferocious character, it would be vain to deny. They ought properly to be considered, however, not as the legislation of a monarch for his own subjects, but that of a commander at the head of an army dictating terms to a defeated enemy. The enactment in question formed part, not of his civil, but of his martial law; and the capital punishments which they denounced were only military executions in another form. We may therefore omit all reference to these capitula, as not coming within the scope of the present chapter.

The other parts of his penal laws are not characterized by any undue severity, but rather by an aversion to inflict death. He appears to have revised the various discordant codes of laws to which reference was previously made, to have reduced them to something like uniformity, and in general to have mitigated their severity.* Charlemagne was especially anxious to diminish the extreme rigour of the punishments inflicted upon the serfs and slaves, and to protect them from the capricious cruelty of their masters. Of this the three

* In this part of Charlemagne's conduct the reader may trace another point of parallel between his proceedings and those of Napoleon at a later period. The latter digested the conflicting laws of France, fusing them into his one "Code Napoléon;" a peaceful trophy of his genius, more durable, perhaps, than his military fame.

following enactments will afford proof:—"Let no lord take away his land from any vassal without just cause, and at the mere impulse of anger." "Whoever holds a fief under us must take as much care as he can, that by God's help none of his slaves shall perish from hunger. And let him not sell the produce of his soil till he has first of all provided for their sustenance." "A man suborned a slave, and induced him to kill his two young masters, aged, the one nine, the other eleven, and then killed the slave himself and threw him into a ditch. Adjudged that the man should pay a wehrgeld for the boy of nine, a double wehrgeld for the boy of eleven, a treble wehrgeld for the slave, and moreover undergo our ban."

This adjudication is instructive, not only as illustrating the atrocious crimes of the age, and the determination of the emperor to repress them, and to protect the life even of a slave, but as bringing before us the principle common to all the laws of his time and race, of levying a pecuniary fine upon the offender rather than inflicting a bodily punishment. As this is one of the most important and characteristic features in the penal laws of the Teutonic nations, it may be well to describe it somewhat fully.

We learn from Tacitus, that in these tribes offences against the community, such as treason or cowardice, were punished with death; the offender being generally thrown into a morass,

and a hurdle being placed upon him.* When the offence, however, was committed against an individual or a family, a fine of horses or cattle was imposed, part of which went to the person injured, or, if he were killed, to his family, and part to the magistrate. The amount of the fine varied with the circumstances of the case, and was assessed in proportion to the rank of the culprit and of the injured party, the nature of the injury, the place where it was committed, as well as the relation in which the parties stood to one another. The utmost ingenuity was displayed in determining the amount of fine which the various combinations of circumstances required. The injury done to a woman was to be compensated by a fine twice the amount of that inflicted for the same injury done to a man. The Anglo-Saxon code fixed the wehrgeld of a king at 30,000 thrismas, of a prince at 15,000, of a bishop or alderman at 8,000, of a sheriff at 4,000, of a ceorle at 266.† The Salic code, which formed the basis of the legislation of Charlemagne, imposed a fine of 600 solidi for the murder of a noble of the first rank, 300 for that of a noble of the second rank, and 200 for an ordinary Frank.‡ But

* The remains of these malefactors are sometimes found in the marshes of Germany at the present day.

† The deodand formerly levied by the coroner seems a relic of this. The word "damages," as used for the pecuniary fine levied by a court of justice, has probably the same origin. Our phrase, "What is he worth?" meaning, How much money has he? is conjectured to originate from the wehrt or money value of the individual in the eye of the law.

‡ The solidus was of the nominal value of 7s. 8½d., equal to £4. 2s. 11d. of our present money. The nominal value of the thrisma was 8½d.

these amounts were modified by the mode in which the murder was committed, whether by a weapon, or by strangling, or by drowning; whether in the party's own house, or in a church, or in the fields; by a stranger, or a friend, or a relative. The same principle was carried out, and the same minute distinctions made in legislating for minor injuries. The eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, each finger, and toe, and tooth, had its special value. The nature of the wound is minutely described; if it drew blood, the depth of the cut and the quantity of blood which flowed; if it caused blackness only, the extent of the black mark; if a bone were splintered, the piece of bone which came out was thrown into a shield, and the distance at which it could be heard falling determined the price to be paid. If from a wound in the head three pieces of bone came out, the fine was 45 solidi; if the wound would not heal, but kept open, 62 solidi, and 9 to the doctor. He who called another a one-eyed fellow must pay 15 solidi; if he called him a pig, 3 solidi; the same if he called him a fox, and twice as much if he called him a hare.

Up to the time of Charlemagne, it seems to have been left to the option of the injured persons whether they would accept the legal composition or seek revenge by private means. This was productive of endless feuds, which, as among the Arabs of our own day, were handed down from father to son with constantly increasing bitterness; vengeance on one side only

provoked retaliation on the other, and thus resentment became fixed and implacable. Charlemagne endeavoured to check this evil by making the payment of the legal fine compulsory on the part of the offender, and its acceptance imperative on the injured party. He enacted in the year 802, "When any person has been guilty of any wrong or outrage, he shall immediately submit to the penance imposed, and offer to pay the fine prescribed by law; if the injured persons or their kindred should refuse to accept this, and presume to avenge themselves by force of arms, their lands and properties shall be forfeited." In this affair, as in many others, Charlemagne was in advance of his age. While he lived, indeed, he compelled obedience, but after his decease the pursuit of personal and private revenge became as common as ever, and continued to be so for many centuries.

Another peculiar and characteristic feature of the criminal process of our Teutonic ancestors in those semi-barbarous ages, and which was regarded with much favour by Charlemagne; was the judgment of God, as it was called, in its twofold form of ordeal and trial by battle. The belief was universal that God when appealed to would interfere, and suspend the laws of nature so as to enable the innocent person to walk on red hot iron, or to plunge a limb into molten lead without injury; that he would, on the other hand, make the most harmless and simple things fatal to the guilty wretch who

dared to invoke the Divine justice; that in judicial combat he would endow the weaker person, if innocent, with supernatural energy, and smite the guilty with impotence or paralyse him with terror. The assertion of a great English poet, that

“Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just,”

was thus with them no figurative expression.

A law of the year 809 enacts, that “all persons shall receive without hesitation or doubt the judgment of God.” In the same year a man who was charged with murder was required to attest his innocence by walking barefoot over nine red hot ploughshares. During the earlier years of Charlemagne’s reign a dispute arose between the bishop of Paris and the abbot of St. Denys, as to the proprietorship of the estates of a small abbey, each claiming them for himself. Unable to decide this question of right, they agreed to refer it to the judgment of God. Each party chose a champion, who was to stand before the high altar during the celebration of mass with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross. He who first became weary and altered his position was adjudged to have lost the cause.

We smile at the superstition and puerility of such modes of deciding questions of truth and right. But let us pause before we too harshly condemn them. They sprang out of a principle true in itself, though superstitious and false in this application of it, that “verily there

is a God that judgeth in the earth," and that there is a Divine superintendence over the affairs of men to which all nature ministers. And though we fully admit that the principle as applied by our ancestors was erroneous and superstitious, yet surely even this error is preferable to that atheistic reasoning so much in vogue in the present day, which would exclude Providence from all interference with human affairs, deny to God the prerogative of ruling and controlling the creatures he had formed, and reduce Divine agency to the inevitable and unswerving operations of natural law.

Whilst the theory of the trial by ordeal is thus excusable, though not entirely justifiable, its operation, we may observe, was not so injurious as has been supposed. Originally it was intended only to be applied to the decision of cases which were so complicated and obscure as to baffle the investigations of rude and simple warriors, who, unused to sift evidence and to balance probabilities, constantly found themselves unable to decide between opposite and conflicting testimonies. What more natural than that, under such circumstances, they should refer the case to the decision of Him who could neither err nor deceive? Nor was the detection of crime an unfrequent occurrence. The guilty person shrank from a resort to that unerring tribunal. He might succeed in baffling the inquiries of his fellow-men, but he feared to appeal to infallible wisdom, immutable and incorruptible justice, and Almighty vengeance.

In innumerable instances, he preferred to pay the penalty imposed by human law rather than incur such fearful peril.* While we maintain that the trial by ordeal was thus, at least, excusable in its first intention and design, it must be admitted that, in after ages, it became an instrument of priestcraft and fraud.

The trial by battle, which in modern times has excited even more sarcasm and derision than the ordeal, admits of a still better justification. It seems to have been originally resorted to only when the injured party refused to accept the pecuniary compensation, of which we have spoken, and insisted upon his right to personal revenge. The judge then in effect said : " Since you insist upon revenging yourself personally upon your enemy, you must do so ; it is your undoubted right, and if you demand it, it must be conceded ; but you shall do it under certain restrictions and limitations which shall give the other party a fair and equal chance with yourself, and it shall be in the presence of judges and witnesses, and accompanied with such solemnities as shall render the act not one of lawless violence, but shall give it a judicial character."

The trial by battle, then, was partly of the nature of an ordeal, and partly designed to act as a limitation and restraint upon the practice

* A strong argument for a special and presiding Providence may be deduced from the universality of trial by ordeal. Every known nation of oriental, classical, or mediæval antiquity, affords instances of its use. Surely a practice so common must have rested upon a principle fundamentally true.

of private vengeance.* The unlimited condemnation with which many modern writers have spoken of these semi-judicial processes, has arisen from estimating them by a comparison with the more perfect and reasonable modes now adopted for the detection and punishment of crime, instead of comparing them with the anarchy and confusion of the preceding ages, from which they afforded the best, and perhaps, indeed, the only means of escape. Charlemagne and his fellow-legislators had not to consider what was best absolutely, but what was best under the circumstances. To have attempted the establishment of a judicial process like that which it is our privilege to enjoy, and to have made this imperative in all cases, would have been to attempt an impossibility, and by aiming at too much nothing would have been effected.

Let those who indulge in such derisive condemnation of the legislation of those times remember, too, that the duel has scarcely ceased among ourselves, and that enlightened and professedly Christian nations still attempt to decide questions of right by an appeal to arms.

These remarks will to some extent apply to the places of sanctuary, which existed in the time of Charlemagne, and which he did not attempt to suppress, but only to regulate. It is admitted, that ultimately they became insufferable nuisances, and that when the arm of the

* For further illustration and confirmation of these views, see the very able disquisitions of Robertson and Guizot on this subject in their respective histories.

law gained strength enough to defend the innocent, they were fitly and necessarily swept away. But in those ages of brutal violence and lawless force, "when life and when female honour were exposed to daily risk from tyrants and marauders, it was better that the precincts of a shrine should be regarded with an irrational awe, than that there should be no refuge inaccessible to cruelty and licentiousness."* It was no small advantage to have some place to which helpless innocence might flee, and where the slave might find a refuge from the vengeance of his feudal tyrant. Since the law was too weak to defend the oppressed, their only refuge was in the inviolable protection of the sanctuary of God. To have invaded this, would have been to violate the last and sole resort of the friendless and forlorn. Charlemagne, therefore, preserved the right of sanctuary undisturbed, and only endeavoured to guard it from abuse. It was enacted, that "if any person convicted of a capital offence should take refuge in a church he should not be supplied with food, that thus he might be compelled to surrender himself to justice." The privilege of affording sanctuary to fugitives was at the same time limited to churches, and no longer permitted to be enjoyed in the royal palaces. "We will and order," says a capitulary of the year 800, "that none of those who serve in our palace take upon himself to receive any person who seeks refuge there, and comes to conceal himself from justice.

* Macaulay's "History of England," chap. i.

If any man violate our prohibition and receive a malefactor into our palace, he shall be forced to take him upon his shoulders, carry him to the place of punishment, and be attached to the same post as the offender."

These penal enactments indicate an advance upon the anarchy of preceding ages, and deserve praise as tending to repress it. Still, what an amount of violence and social disorder do they show to have been still existing in a state of society which tolerated them, and how inadequate were they to check or punish crime! It is impossible to contrast the state of things thus presented to us with the almost perfect security against lawless force afforded in the present day, and the nearly inevitable punishment which sooner or later overtakes the wrong doer, without beholding grounds for deep gratitude to God, who has ordained a government that "bears not the sword in vain," but is a terror to evil doers, and "a praise to them that do well."

The next branch of the legislation of Charlemagne to be considered by us is the ecclesiastical. Adequately to estimate it, we must bear in mind that Rome, though far less corrupt than she afterwards became, had even then entered upon that career of aggression upon the prerogatives of rulers, the liberties of nations, the consciences of individuals, and the rights of God, which have rendered her influence so disastrous to all who have been subject to it. She had already begun to elevate her priest-

hood into a position hostile alike to liberty and true religion, and had adopted many of those baleful superstitions, whose main object was and is to enhance her own power, and to replenish her coffers with "the merchandise of the souls of men."

To all such fatal superstitions, insolent pretensions, and priestly exactions, Charlemagne was a zealous and determined opponent, as the following capitula will show.

At a council held at Chalons, in the year 813, in order to check the growing indolence and power of the monastic orders, it was decreed: "There are priests who lead an idle life, and trust thereby to be purified from sin, and to fulfil the duties of their vocation; and there are laymen who believe that they may sin, or that they have sinned with impunity because they undertake such and such pilgrimages; there are great men who, under the pretence of religion, practise extortion upon the poor; and there are poor who employ the same pretexts to render begging more profitable. Such are those who wander about and declare that they are on a pilgrimage; while there are others whose folly is so great, that they believe the mere sight of or dwelling in the holy places will purify them from sin, forgetting the words of St. Jerome, who says, that there is nothing meritorious at Jerusalem but the leading a good life there."

Again, in order to repress the evils which had even then become rife in the confessional,

it was enacted, that "we must confess our sins to God, who alone has power to forgive sin, according to the thirty-first Psalm, and we must pray to him for salvation. It is by this confession to God that a man becomes purified; by confession to a priest he only learns the means proper for him to adopt to gain purification. Let not penance be estimated by the length of time spent in it, but by the intensity of contrition and self-mortification, for it is the *contrite heart and the humble spirit* which God will not despise."

So, too, it was decreed: "Let not a man hope to gain forgiveness by donations to the priest or alms to the poor. Those who act thus seem to think that they can bribe God to let them sin with impunity. If Divine justice could be thus satisfied, Christ would not have said that the rich would find most difficulty in entering the kingdom of heaven."

In the diet held at Aix la Chapelle, in the year 811, the following instructions were issued to the *Missi Dominici*:*—"Interrogate the bishops and abbots closely on the meaning of the words of the apostle, 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.' Inquire from them to whom these words apply. Desire them to tell us plainly what is the meaning of the words always in their mouth, 'Renounce the world,' and by what signs we may distinguish those who do renounce the world. Is it merely that they do not bear arms

* A kind of royal commissioner.

or marry publicly ? Ask them further, whether he is to be considered as having renounced the world whom we see daily, by all sorts of means, labouring to increase his possessions, sometimes employing threats of eternal flames, sometimes promises of everlasting blessedness ; in the name of God, or of some saint, despoiling simple men of their property, to the infinite prejudice of the lawful heirs, who are often driven by poverty into crime."

To repress the military habits of the prelates it was decreed : "Henceforth let no priest engage in war, but let two or three chosen bishops attend the army, with a certain number of priests, to administer the rites of religion. What victory can be hoped for when the priests are at one hour administering the eucharist to Christians, and at the next slaying with their own wicked hands those who had received it, and to whom they ought to have been preaching Christ ?"

While he thus endeavoured to check the rapacity, violence, and sloth of the clergy, he at the same time boldly protested against the superstitious practices they were introducing, as the following enactment will show :—"Let no man suppose that God is to be prayed to in three languages* only, for God may be prayed to in every language, and man is heard in them if he ask just things." (A.D. 794.) "Let care

* Probably the Greek, Latin, and German. The Romish church has since that time still further restricted the language of prayer to one of these.

be taken not to venerate the memory of doubtful martyrs or of false saints. Let no chapels be dedicated to the honour of such. (A.D. 789.)

Charlemagne, in his ecclesiastical legislation, did not rest satisfied with endeavouring to repress what was wrong ; he addressed himself with equal wisdom and energy to the more difficult task of fitting the priesthood of his day for the discharge of their arduous and responsible duties. Especially did he seek to prompt them to a more diligent and efficient ministry of the word. This was the more important, as the Romish church had begun to regard religion as a mere round of ceremonial observances, and to teach that the sacraments were efficacious in procuring salvation apart from the state of feeling of the communicant. Hence it was deemed sufficient for the priest to recite the words of the service, though both himself and his hearers were ignorant of their meaning ; and to perform the prescribed rite, though insensible to its spiritual import and significance. As a consequence of this reliance upon the mere words or ceremonies of religious services, the office of preaching became either altogether neglected, or so negligently performed as to be almost useless. Such is the inevitable consequence of the doctrine of sacramental salvation. By making religion consist in something else than the intelligent reception of the truth by faith, it puts into the background that preaching of the cross which seems "to men foolishness," but which is still the

means by which "it hath pleased God to save them that believe." It is by no *external ordinance*, whether of human or Divine institution, that the sinner is saved. We are "justified by faith," and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is not by the utterance of certain mystical and ill understood words to the ear, nor the performance of a ceremonial, however dazzling or solemn, to the eye, but the intelligent appreciation and believing reception of spiritual truth, that the great ends of the gospel and the church are to be attained.

This the clear and vigorous mind of Charlemagne distinctly perceived. He therefore required that "every priest should be able not only to recite the offices of devotion, but to expound them in plain and common language." The synod of Cloveshove enacted, that "the priest, at his ordination, should be made to translate into the vulgar tongue of the people among whom he ministered, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the forms for the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, and to explain them in the same; and that the priest should seek to understand the spiritual meaning of all the services and rites, so as not to be a dumb and senseless instrument while praying to God for the sins of the people, and exercising that ministry by which they were to attain everlasting life." In this enactment we have a striking illustration of the ignorance of the clergy of that day, since so little was

required of them as necessary to the due discharge of their office.

In order to render to the above and similar decrees effective, it was ordered that "schools should be established for the purpose of giving instruction in general learning, but most especially in the exposition of the Scriptures; that thus a ministry might be trained up, of whom Christ would indeed say, 'Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the lights of the world.'"

Whilst means were employed to train and educate the religious teachers of the people, the practical duties of their office were kept steadily before them. One capitulary says, "Let preaching be always performed in such a manner that the common people may be able to understand it thoroughly." The rules laid down by Chrodegang, bishop of Mentz, for the regulation of the clergy of his diocese, were adopted by the emperor, and issued under his sanction and authority. They ordered that "the word of salvation should be preached at least twice in every month, and, whenever possible, on every sabbath and festival, and this must be done in such a way that all may understand it. Let the bishops, too, in their visitations of their dioceses, preach to the people whenever they have the opportunity, for the advantage of those who rarely hear the word of God." The bishops and clergy were likewise ordered "to provide persons who could preach to the people in a fit and intelligible manner whenever they were absent from their

charges." Another clause provides that these enactments take effect, not in the towns only, but also in villages and country places.

In carrying out these decrees into practical fulfilment, there was a very important difficulty to be met and provided for. We have seen that the clergy were so ignorant and illiterate, that a special law was needed requiring them to be able to expound the simplest forms of the church, and this was the utmost that could be demanded from them. How then, could, they be expected to preach adequately and intelligently? To meet this case a new *Homilium*, or Sermon Book, was ordered to be prepared, the one already in existence being very defective, and, in many respects, objectionable. The preparation of this volume was entrusted to Paul Warnefried, (or Paulus Diaconus, as he is often styled,) under the superintendence of Alcuin and the emperor himself.

The royal ordinance appointing these homilies to be read in the churches, affords an interesting illustration of the feelings of Charlemagne in the matter. It is among the capitularies of the year 788.

"Charles, by the aid of God, king of the Franks and Lombards, and prince of the Romans, to the ministers of religion throughout our dominions: Having it very near our heart that the state of the churches should more and more advance toward perfection, and being desirous of restoring, by assiduous care, the cultivation of letters, which have almost entirely

disappeared from among us, in consequence of the neglect of our ancestors ; we would excite by our own example all well-disposed persons to the study of the liberal arts. To this purpose we have already, by God's constant help, accurately corrected the books of the Old and New Testament, which had become corrupted by the ignorance of copyists. We could not endure that among the sacred lessons in the worship of God there should constantly occur discordant and ungrammatical errors ; and we therefore conceived the design of reforming these lessons. We entrusted this work to our servant Paul. We commanded him to go diligently through the writings of the fathers, and culling thence the finest and most useful passages, to blend them, as it were, into a fragrant and beneficial garland. Eager to obey our command, he reperused the writings of the orthodox fathers, and, selecting the best of these, has presented to us, in two volumes, a series of divine discourses adapted to every day in the year. We have examined these volumes, and find them worthy of our sanction. We therefore transmit them to you to be read in the churches under your care."

The bishops were subsequently enjoined to have this Homiliarium translated, with the utmost plainness and simplicity, into the various dialects of the districts under their charge, "so that all persons might be able easily to understand the things which were said." This compilation continued in common use

in Germany till the close of the fifteenth century.

These extracts may suffice to give some idea of the ecclesiastical legislation of this extraordinary man. It is impossible to read even these brief quotations from it without perceiving that a clear conviction was present to his mind that civilization and good order were to be promoted, and that anarchy and barbarism were to be repressed only by the influences of Christianity—and that Christianity was to be promoted only by the promulgation of the truths of the gospel. It is due, however, to the illustrious Englishman, Alcuin, who was the most trusted counsellor and friend of the emperor, to say, that much of this ecclesiastical policy was the result of his influence. Even when Charlemagne sought to diffuse Christianity by other means, as, for instance, when he attempted to convert the Saxons at the sword's point, this faithful adviser thus counselled his royal master :—"Let your majesty cease from uttering threats, and abandon violence. Send missionaries, not soldiers ; missionaries not bent upon enriching themselves, but who shall count it 'more blessed to give than to receive.' Men are to be attracted to the faith, not forced into it. You may compel them to receive baptism, but without faith this is useless. Let your majesty therefore provide preachers, upright in conduct, thoroughly conversant with religious truth, imbued with the Divine precepts, and intent upon following the examples set before us

in God's word. Let them feed their converts with sound doctrines and mild precepts, as an infant is fed with milk, since they are but babes in Christ. And let especially care be taken that the preaching of God's word go together with the administration of the sacraments, for the washing of the body in baptism will profit nothing to the convert unless it have been preceded by an acknowledgment of the truth." Happy the monarch who has such a counsellor ; and happy the nation whose prince listens to such advice !

From Charlemagne's ecclesiastical we pass on to his social legislation. And here, first in importance, come his enactments for the diffusion of education. We have already seen how zealous he was to promote sacred learning among his clergy ; we have now to speak of his efforts to spread general knowledge among all classes.

A royal ordinance, issued to the bishops and abbots of his dominions, in the year 787, will perhaps illustrate his feelings on this subject:—
“ We beg to inform your devotion to God, that, in concert with our councillors, we have deemed it beneficial that, in the bishoprics and monasteries confided to our care by God, we should see to it, not only that persons live piously and according to our holy religion, but that, moreover, they should give instruction in the knowledge of literature to all who, by God's help, are able and willing to learn. For though, of the two, it is better to be good than to be learned, yet to have learning leads to being

good. In the various letters addressed to us we have remarked that, whilst the sentiments are for the most part excellent, yet the language in which they are expressed is often rude and illiterate ; so that the fine thoughts which piety dictates, an unskilful and uneducated tongue mutilates in the delivery. This inspires us with the apprehension lest the same ignorance should keep them from a due understanding of the Scriptures. It is at all events certain that the language of the sacred writings will be better understood by those who are likewise versed in general learning. We therefore would have you select from among your brethren those who are fitted, first for learning themselves, and then for teaching others ; and let such at once proceed to their work of instruction with the least possible delay. As you value our favour, take care to communicate this decree to all the bishops and monasteries in your neighbourhood immediately."

Among the schools thus established, those of Tours, Lyons, Orleans, Rheims, Fulda, Old and New Corvey, Reichenau, and St. Gall, became especially famous, and laid the foundations of important universities in after years. The studies pursued in these places were divided into two classes, the Trivia and the Quadrivia, which together made up the seven liberal arts. The Trivia* consisted of grammar, logic, and rhetoric ; the Quadrivia, of music, arithmetic,

* Hence probably our word trivial—the trivia being the simplest rudiments taught on entering school.

geography, and astronomy. Within these narrow boundaries was then contained the whole sum of human knowledge. Yet poor and, as far as practical utility went, of little worth as this learning was, it was a mighty advance upon the utter ignorance of the preceding generations. Mental activity, however ill directed, and though barren of immediate results, is immensely better than absolute stagnation and inaction. The movement of mind thus excited by Charlemagne never entirely ceased. With intervals of collapse, with alternate progress and retrogression, there was still motion, and, on the whole, advance; till the glorious era of the Reformation came, when the mind of Europe, bursting its fetters, and shaking off the sloth of ages, came forth from its dark prison-house, and asserted and vindicated its inalienable right to knowledge, and its determination to possess it. In reference to recent efforts to disseminate doctrines which would bring us back again to an age of ignorance, the words of Milton may be appropriately employed: "Oh! let them not bring about their accursed designs, who now stand at the entrance of the bottomless pit, expecting the watchword to open, and let out those dreadful locusts and scorpions, to reinvolve us in that pitchy cloud of infernal darkness, where we shall never more see the sun of Thy truth again, never hope for the cheerful dawn, never more hear the bird of morning sing."*

* Milton on the Reformation in England.

Of scarcely less importance than his educational legislation are those enactments by which Charlemagne endeavoured to regulate the relations between husband and wife, parents and children. The prime requisite for a well-ordered state is unquestionably a well-ordered family. It is the basis on which society rests ; it lies at the foundation of the whole social fabric. If the family bond be weak, that which unites society cannot be strong. Respect for authority and reverence for law can only be produced by a habit of parental control on the one hand, and of filial obedience on the other. All history proves that the family is the school in which the subjects of the state are trained and disciplined. Hence the importance of that part of his legislation which Charlemagne, treading in the steps of his father Pepin, entered upon in relation to this subject. Marriage had previously been contracted almost without any formality ; and had been dissolved without scruple, at the bidding merely of passion or caprice. Woman thus became a slave, kept to gratify her master's lust ; man lost all that civilizing and refining influence which female society was designed to have upon him ; and the children grew up without that parental control which was needed to curb the license of youth and to fit for the duties of manhood. To repress these evils, Charlemagne rendered the marriage tie binding and permanent, only permitting divorce within the limits and under the circumstances assigned by the canon law. He

at the same time made marriage a religious rite, investing it with the solemn and sacred character of an act performed in the Divine presence and under Divine authority.

In all social legislation the poor must have place, for "the poor have ye always with you." A law for the suppression of mendicity, and the establishment of what was equivalent to our poor-rate, now unexpectedly appears. In the year 806 it was decreed that, "with regard to vagrant mendicants, we order that each of our subjects support his own poor, either on his farm or in his house, and not allow them to go elsewhere to beg. If such beggars are found, and they do no work, let no man think of giving them anything." A law, similar in spirit to this, has been previously quoted, in which he enjoined that the produce of the farm should not be sold till the serfs upon it had first been provided for. Charlemagne was specially severe on those begging ascetics who, like the fakirs of India and the dervises of Turkey, assumed the religious garb, that thus they might the more successfully appeal to the charity of the industrious and devout. He strictly forbids their "wandering about half naked, laden with chains, and inflicting tortures upon themselves. If they have indeed committed sins, it is better that they should remain in one place and work for their living."

That these enactments against mendicants were not dictated by any unkindness towards the poor, seems proved by many edicts already

quoted in their favour. That he was most anxious to protect them from the oppression of the rich and powerful, is decisively shown by a law which attempts to fix the maximum price at which food should be sold. "The most pious king has decreed, that no man, whether he be clergyman or layman, shall, either in seasons of plenty or scarcity, sell provisions at a dearer rate than that recently fixed by the bushel. If he wishes to sell his produce in loaves, he shall give twelve of wheat, fifteen of rye, twenty of barley, or twenty-five of oats, each loaf of two pounds' weight, for one denier."* However inefficacious all such attempts to fix a maximum price must necessarily prove, (a truth, however, only recently discovered,) yet they evince the interest which Charlemagne took in the welfare of the poorer classes, on whose behalf alone such an enactment was passed.

It would be unfair to judge of his commercial legislation by this single edict. For the most part it was wise, judicious, and based upon sound policy. Its character and results are thus summed up by Menzel. "Notwithstanding the disinclination of the Germans for commerce, he attempted to encourage its pursuit by granting extraordinary privileges to merchants.† The Jews, who, after the destruction of Jeru-

* The *denier* contained, in the time of Charlemagne, twenty-eight grains of fine silver.

† A similar spirit was displayed in the Anglo-Saxon laws. By an edict of Athelstane, a merchant who had crossed the seas three times was raised to the rank and privileges of a Franklin.

saalem, had been carried away captive by the Romans, and scattered over the face of the earth, had, since Rome had fallen under the dominion of Germany, busied themselves exclusively with commerce; and Charlemagne, uninfluenced by the prejudices of his subjects, granted them every privilege demanded by humanity and consistent with the welfare of his state. Travelling merchants were protected by severe laws. Commercial treaties and alliances were formed with the nations, and new markets open to foreign traders, were organized in the interior."

It would be easy to multiply such extracts from the legislation of Charlemagne almost indefinitely. Those already furnished, however, will suffice to give an idea of its general character and of the spirit which dictated it. To some it may seem a heterogeneous mass. There are no general principles announced, no great theory of government developed and acted upon. Each special case was provided for as it arose by a special enactment. This, however, was inevitable. The time was not come for theorizing. Rulers in a stage of civilization, just emerging from barbarism, and liable at any moment to fall back again into it, have neither the capacity nor the desire to generalize or form theories of government. They are too glad to hit upon some expedient which will meet and provide for the particular exigency, to trouble themselves with abstract inquiries into its consistency with the true prin-

ciples of government. When grappling with impending anarchy, they must legislate for the moment, and leave it to after ages to systematize their laws. Looked at in this light, we cannot but feel that Charlemagne, as a lawgiver, merits all the praise he has received. Taking into account the circumstances of the times, we cannot but wonder at the vigorous sense, the manly independence, and the clear judgment, which his legislation everywhere evinces. That there should be errors was inevitable, for it was the darkest period of the dark ages, and the legislator was an illiterate warrior, presiding over an assembly of warriors more illiterate than himself. That some superstitions should be countenanced was equally inevitable, for the Romish church, the only one which Charlemagne knew, was already very far gone in her apostacy. But is it not marvellous that the errors should be so few, and that, in spite of the corruptions of Rome, so much pure Scriptural truth should be asserted?

Having considered the legislative assembly and the legislation of Charlemagne, we have now to give some account of the administration and execution of the laws. Here, again, the emperor himself occupies the most prominent position. As his was the mind that planned, the will that determined, and the authority that decreed the laws, so, too, his was the hand that enforced them. He was not only legislator, but judge. Eginhardt says, that he was constantly travelling, and his travels, though undertaken

for some military or political purpose, were always, in addition to their primary object, a protracted court of assize. Everywhere he inquired into the operation and administration of the laws, correcting what was amiss, and commending what he approved. Every morning, as soon as he arose, suitors were admitted into his bedchamber to communicate to him cases of difficulty, which the ordinary ministers of justice had failed to decide, and he held a court of appeal as he dressed.

But active as he was, and carefully as he economized his time, it is evident that it would be utterly impossible for him to discharge all the judicial functions of so vast an empire, especially among a people so addicted to acts of lawless violence as were his subjects. He therefore appointed in every district officers to act in his name and under his authority. These may be divided into two classes, the regular and the occasional. The former were resident governors to whom a province was assigned, in which they were to administer the laws, and for the good order of which they were responsible to the king. The only peculiarity in this part of his government was, the preference he displayed for ecclesiastics over secular or military nobles. He constantly displaced the latter for the former, and this especially in the conquered districts. The reason for this preference was twofold. First, because the clergy, though ignorant in comparison with the attainments of our age, were yet very far in

advance of the laity of their own day. They had at least some tincture of learning, and those whom he patronised and elevated were, for the most part, men who had distinguished themselves by diligence and progress in study at their respective schools. The ecclesiastics were, moreover, from their very position and profession, favourable to the promotion of civilization and the maintenance of peace—qualities rarely to be found among the rude secular nobles, whose only business was war, and whose only pastime was the chase. But he had a second motive; he believed that he should find his priestly functionaries less ambitious, less anxious for personal aggrandizement, less desirous to erect their dioceses into independent principalities, than others.* Little did he know how dangerous a thing it is to employ religion as a political engine, and to withdraw the church from the performance of its spiritual functions by imposing upon it secular offices and honours. “Who made me a judge or a divider over you?” is a question which it behoves the church to take up and reiterate from the lips of its Divine Master. Whilst Charlemagne lived, his vigorous government kept his ecclesiastical officials in check; they continued submissive to his bidding, and the

* William of Malmesbury writes:—“Charles the Great, in order that he might check the ferocity of the people, placed ecclesiastics over almost all the provinces, considering that men in sacred offices would be less disposed than others to rebel or shake off their allegiance; and that if laymen should attempt this under their government, they would be able to keep them in check by their spiritual terrors.”

only evils which resulted from their appointment was, that they were withdrawn from the sacred duties of their own holy office. Scarcely was he dead, however, when Rome began to put in practice her invariable policy of making religious pretensions the path to temporal aggrandizement. The garb of humility and spirituality, which the bishops had worn to cloak their ambitious designs during the lifetime of the great monarch, were then stripped off, and the rights of their king and the liberties of their fellow-subjects were shamelessly trampled under foot. They declared their independence of all regal authority and restraint. They erected their dioceses into independent principalities. Their cathedrals were changed into strongholds filled with armed men, rivalling in strength and wickedness the castles of the feudal chiefs. Hence sprang those prince-bishops who wrought such fearful mischiefs throughout Germany in the succeeding century. Another fact is thus added to the demonstration afforded by all history of the truth, that whatever may be the professions of the Romish church, or whatever its conduct when under restraint, its real designs are secular aggrandizement, tyranny, and usurpation.

In order to superintend and control these stated and regular officers of his government, Charlemagne employed others, whose duties were but occasional and temporary, and who were called *Missi Dominici*. They were despatched as ambassadors into the provinces in

order to investigate the whole state of their affairs. Their duties were most multifarious. They included the superintendence of the conduct of the governors, the administration of the laws, the raising of troops and taxes, the disposition of the people, the competency of the clergy, the good order of the schools, and the management of the royal farms. On all these matters they had to report to the emperor, both as to the evils they found existing, and the measures they adopted to check them.

Of the need which existed for these Missi, or Commissioners, and of the mode in which they discharged the duties of their office, we have an illustration in the narrative given by Theodulf, bishop of Orleans, and Leidrade, bishop of Lyons, who had been appointed specially to investigate and reform the mal-administration of the law in the southern provinces. According to the fashion of the times, they make their report in a very florid and verbose poem of nearly a thousand lines. The following condensed extract will give an idea of the whole:—"A large crowd pressed around us of both sexes and of every age. The entire people promise us gifts, and think that by offering bribes whatever they ask is as good as done. Here one offered me crystals and precious stones from the east if I would make him master of the domains of another; a second offered gold and silver if I would put him in possession of lands he coveted; a third described a most exquisitely

chased antique vase, a masterpiece of art, saying, 'I will give you this if you will grant my wishes. There are a great number of men and women, young persons and children, of both sexes, to whom my father and mother gave a charter of emancipation; let us alter or cancel this charter, and I shall enjoy the possession of these slaves and you of this costly vase.' Another offered beautiful clothes and costly cups, saying, 'My father left a well-watered estate, covered with vineyards, olive groves, meadows, and gardens, and my brothers and sisters claim their share, but I wish to possess it without partition. Give what I wish, and accept what I offer.' The poor are no less urgent in their bribery than the rich. Some bring pieces of cloth, others napkins, others boxes, and one, with a look of triumph, as though sure of success, brought some little candles made of wax. Thus all persons sought to bribe us. Oh! wicked pest! Oh! corruption, which spreads itself universally! Nowhere is there wanting people who give and who take wrongfully. They would not have expected thus to corrupt us with gifts had they not found these means successful with our predecessors. No one seeks wild boars in the water, or fish in the forests, or water in the fire. They expect everything where they have been accustomed to find it." The indignant virtue of the good bishops did not, however, prevent them from accepting some of the presents which were offered. They represent that to have

refused to do so would have excited too much astonishment from its novelty. "We accepted with thanks the little presents made to us by the hand of friendship, such as fruit, vegetables, eggs, wine, bread, and hay. We took likewise some young fowls and some birds, smaller in size, but very good to eat. *Happy the virtue which is tempered, adorned, and maintained by discretion, the nurse of all virtues!*"

Some of the instructions given to the Missi are very curious, as illustrations of the emperor's perfect acquaintance with, and personal surveillance over, the minutest affairs of his widely extended government. For instance, "Remember to order that they who send us horses as presents, inscribe their names on each horse, and so too with the robes sent from the abbeys." "Recollect to order that whenever official persons either do evil or suffer it to be done, they be expelled from their offices and be replaced by others of better character." "Inquire how it is that whenever anything of importance has to be done on the frontiers or in the army, one man will not help another to do it." "What is the meaning of these constant lawsuits of which I hear between neighbours? No man seems contented with what he possesses, but is striving to wrest property from those who live near him."

Still more curious are the instructions given to them as to the management of the royal farms. The breeding of horses, the sale of eggs, the rearing of poultry, are all regulated

by orders given by the king. Suspecting that there is peculation in one department, he orders that an exact account be sent to him of the horns and skins of the goats which were killed, and how much they were sold for. The larger farms are to maintain one hundred hens and thirty geese, the smaller fifty hens and twelve geese.*

The emperor thus possessed absolute and entire control over all the officers of his vast dominions. Whilst he showed himself equal to the greatest and most trying emergencies, he yet stooped to the minutest details. Alike in the enactment and the execution of the laws, he was head and chief. The great national assembly, as we have seen, only possessed deliberative authority, could only act in the way of counsel and advice. The laws all originated in, and were determined by him. The officers employed to carry out the laws were simply his agents and representatives. They held office during his pleasure; they received from him the most precise directions as to their conduct, and rendered to him an account of all they saw and did. He, in fact, only multiplied his own energy and activity by the number of agents he employed. In all the affairs of that vast empire, Charlemagne was everything and everywhere. Though in the system which he established we may trace the germs of our modern representative institutions, yet it was an absolute autocracy, a paternal despotism.

* *Capitulary de Villis.*

That it should be so was necessary under the circumstances. The choice lay between such a system and anarchy. The age was not ripe for a constitutional monarchy. There needed a man of strong arm and resolute will to bend events to his own designs, or, if they would not bend, to crush them.—Just such was Charlemagne. It is impossible to conceive of a ruler more perfectly adapted to the wants and necessities of his age than was he. When he appeared upon the scene of action, all men instinctively turned to him as the one who alone could meet the exigencies of the times. This perfect and complete coincidence between its requirements and his character is only explicable on the assumption that there is an overruling Providence ordering our affairs, and raising up instrumentalities and agencies exactly fitted to accomplish its benignant designs. He who is “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” “the blessed and only Potentate,” employs earth’s mightiest rulers but as his creatures and servants to fulfil his august and gracious purposes toward a world steeped in ignorance, barbarism, and guilt. “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; *I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight. . . . For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me,*” Isa. xlv. 1–5.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELATIONS OF CHARLEMAGNE WITH
THE PAPACY.

Distinction between the papacy as a creed and an organization—Favour with which it was regarded by Charlemagne under the latter aspect—Reasons for this—Interference of Pepin on behalf of the pope—The forgery of a letter from the apostle Peter to the Franks—First visit of Charlemagne to Rome—His promises and reluctance to fulfil them—Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals—Protest of the clergy and laity of Italy against the papal pretensions—Charges against the pope—His insatiable avarice—The debate on image worship—Its unanimous rejection and condemnation by the Frank bishops—The *Libri Carolini*—The Adoption controversy—Elevation of Leo to the pontificate—Revolt of the Romans against him—Charlemagne visits Rome to quell the insurrection—Is there crowned and inaugurated as emperor—Reflections on this narrative.

ROMAN Catholicism consists of two elements, which, though always found in association, are yet perfectly distinct and easily distinguishable. It is a creed, and it is an organization—a system of doctrines, and an ecclesiastical corporation, whose head is at Rome, and whose members stretch themselves over the whole earth.

Under the former of these aspects we have seen how Charlemagne regarded it, how resolutely he opposed its unscriptural rites and anti-scriptural doctrines, and how earnestly he

sought to counteract the influences of its superstitious ritualism, by asserting the necessity of faith and prayer, and a personal acceptance of, and submission to, the truths of the gospel.

We have now to speak of the relations between the emperor and the papal church under the latter of these aspects—as an organization or ecclesiastical corporation. However hostile he may have shown himself to the papal *creed and ritual* in those points in which they diverged from the Christianity inculcated by Christ and his apostles, he yet regarded the *papacy itself* with considerable favour, and extended to it his patronage.

The reasons which led him to feel and act thus are obvious. He felt it to be his special mission and work to defend and promote civilization, law, and order; to rescue Europe from the anarchy and barbarism into which it was fast settling down; and to diffuse and foster the arts of peace. The only body to which he could look for aid in this great task was the Romish church. All the secular nobility, all the military chiefs, and the immense majority of freemen, not in his own empire only, but throughout central and western Europe, were disposed to side with the party of war rather than with the party of peace. All their habits of life and their modes of thought and feeling, made them hostile to the restraints of a powerful government, and led them to regard with contempt the sedentary engagements of art and literature. With the priesthood the

case was different. They had everything to lose and to suffer by a continuance of anarchy ; everything to gain by the re-establishment of order. Always surrounded by violence, and often attacked by it, their only defence was the moral power they could exert. To brute force they could simply oppose the influences of superior knowledge and religion, in their case aided by superstitious terrors. From mere selfish considerations, and from personal interest, therefore, they were disposed to side with the emperor in his efforts to establish a strong central government, which could defend the weak against the strong.

It would be injustice to the church of that age to suppose that it advocated the cause of peace and civilization solely from interested motives. Whatever zeal there existed for learning and for art was almost confined to the monks and clergy. Amongst them the light of knowledge was not altogether extinguished. It burned, indeed, with a feeble and flickering flame—it was almost buried—but still it did burn. “Ye are the light of the world,” was in one sense true of the church in those chaotic ages ; since, dark as it was, the world was darker still. The commission to “go and teach all nations,” which has been the glory and duty of the church ever since the ascension of its Divine Master, has never been *entirely* lost sight of. The fact that, in these latter days, Rome has shown herself the implacable foe of education, must not blind us to

the fact, that Charlemagne could find aid in his educational projects only from the clergy. "Whatever reproach," says Mr. Macaulay, "may, at a later period, have been justly thrown on the indolence and luxury of the religious orders, yet, in that age of ignorance and violence, they afforded quiet cloisters and gardens in which the arts of peace could be safely cultivated; in which gentle and contemplative natures could find an asylum; in which one brother could employ himself in transcribing the *Æneid* of Virgil, and another in meditating the *Analytic* of Aristotle; in which he who had a genius for art might illuminate a martyrology or carve a crucifix; and in which he who had a turn for natural philosophy might make experiments on the properties of plants and minerals. Had not such retreats been scattered here and there among the huts of a miserable peasantry, and the castles of a ferocious aristocracy, European society would have consisted merely of beasts of burden and beasts of prey. The church has many times been compared by divines to that ark of which we read in the book of Genesis; but never was the resemblance more perfect than during that evil time when she alone rode, amidst darkness and tempests, on the deluge beneath which all the great works of ancient power and wisdom lay entombed, bearing within her that feeble germ from which a second and more glorious civilization was to spring." To the church, then, Charlemagne was compelled to turn in his

search for men who would or could co-operate with him in his great work. In bearing this testimony to the merits of the ecclesiastics of that age, it may be proper to remark, that no admirers of these times can point to the services of the clergy in preserving literature as a ground for the revival of mediæval principles. It was because error had not entirely overshadowed the church that it still retained, in some degree, its character as a fosterer of letters. The age of true intellectual progress dates from the era of the Reformation.

Charlemagne was still further influenced in the favour with which he regarded the church by the conviction, which we have already seen to have been present to his mind both in his military and his legislative policy, that religion was the great agency for civilizing Europe. Into whatever errors men may have fallen in the application of this principle, all history proves that the principle itself is a sound and true one. In every country and clime, from the burning sands of Africa to the perpetual snows of Greenland ; amongst the fierce tribes of ancient Scandinavia and the licentious indolence of Hindostan ; where the Indian yells his war whoop, and where the Negro sinks down in squalid degradation, Christianity has proved the great means of refining and elevating those who were inaccessible to or proof against any other influence. Every form of political organization, of philosophic speculation, of philanthropic endeavour, has been tried and failed ;

but godliness has proved itself to be profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. These motives, together with his own personal religious emotions, made Charlemagne favourably disposed toward the papacy, and will explain much of his conduct with regard to that fallen and apostate church, which would otherwise be inexplicable. We proceed to trace out the history of his connexion and intercourse with it.

At the coronation of Pepin, as king of the Franks, the pope conferred upon him the office of patrician of Rome, thus putting that city under his government and protection. He had, indeed, no right to confer this title. The act was a direct and daring violation of the authority of the emperor of the east, whose subject he was. But as the Romish pontiff had resolved to throw off his allegiance to the old imperial power, he sought to effect his purpose by transferring it to the rising sovereignty of the Franks. That this office was to be no sinecure soon became evident, for Rome being attacked by the Lombards, Stephen, who was then pope, crossed the Alps to implore in person aid in defence of the city. He was present at the Champ de Mai, in the year 754, and so eloquently pleaded his cause before the assembled warriors, that when he and his suite fell prostrate at the feet of the king, declaring that they would not rise till he promised to come to their succour, the whole people promptly flew to raise them from the earth, and though gene-

rally indisposed to such distant and unprofitable expeditions as that into Italy was likely to prove, they yet entered upon the campaign with great ardour. Aistolphus, the Lombard king, was speedily defeated, and compelled to surrender the districts he had overrun. To this territory, the pope had not the slightest shadow of a claim, nor did he so much as pretend any. He was, indeed, proprietor of considerable landed estates, which had been bequeathed to him by the piety or superstition of preceding ages, but further right he had none. The district had been conquered by the Lombards, not from the pope, but from the Greek emperor. Pepin, however, having reconquered the territory, compelled Aistolphus to surrender it, not to its former and rightful sovereign, but "to God and the holy Roman republic," in other words, to the pope. In vain did the emperor protest against this invasion of his rights, and the profanation and prostitution of the sacred name employed to justify it. Pepin replied, that he had acted for the glory of God and the salvation of his soul, and no earthly power should compel him to retract.

This surrender of territory by the Lombards, however, was but nominal. As soon as Pepin had retired from Italy, Aistolphus again took possession of his former conquests. Stephen was, therefore, compelled once more to appeal to his new defenders and allies. His first request for aid had been made as a suppliant clad in sackcloth, but now, finding that he had

to do with a superstitious people, who regarded him as an almost divine person, he changed his tone to that of threatening and command. In this he only acted upon the invariable policy of his church through all ages. Where Rome has dared, she has been insolent and defiant; when she has been firmly opposed, she has ever been crouching and servile. She has been the slave, the rebel, and the usurper, by turns; licking the dust beneath the feet of kings, or plunging the dagger into their hearts.

That the appeal now made might have greater urgency and force, it was presented in the name of the apostle Peter. The letter is a startling example of mingled arrogance and impiety. It is to the following effect: "I, Peter the apostle, who regard you as my adopted sons, exhort you to defend against the hands of my adversaries, and to pluck from their polluting touch, this Roman state and people, who were committed to me by God, and which is the home where I live after the flesh. I therefore admonish you to deliver the church of God committed to me by Divine authority. Our lady the virgin Mary, the mother of God, moreover, beseeches, admonishes, and commands you together with us—as likewise do the thrones, dominions, and all the hosts of heaven, and the holy martyrs and confessors, joining their adjurations and entreaties with ours. Afford help, therefore, to the utmost of your power to my Roman people, so that I, Peter, the apostle of God, may afford defence to you both

in this life and at the day of judgment ; that I may prepare for you splendid mansions in the kingdom of God, and assign you eternal blessedness and the infinite delights of paradise. Be not separated from my Roman people, if you would not be separated from the kingdom of God and eternal life. For whatsoever ye shall ask from me I will succour you in. But should you prove unwilling, know that by the authority of the Holy Trinity committed to me by Christ the Lord, you, as the penalty of disobedience to our commands, shall be excluded from the kingdom of God and immortal life."

It has been asserted that the pope, in writing thus, had no intention of passing off the letter as the veritable production of the apostle whose name it bears, and that the use of Peter's name is simply a rhetorical embellishment. But it is difficult to see how language could be made more explicit and precise, or why the pontiff should have used such phraseology except in order to impose upon the credulity and superstition of those to whom it was addressed. The question whether he did or did not palm off the document as St. Peter's genuine letter is, however, one of very small consequence. If he did, he stands convicted before us of forgery and fraud. If he did not—if he wished it to be understood that the letter emanated from himself, and himself alone—what are we to think of the monstrous pride and profanity of the man, who could thus arrogate to himself authority to deliver the souls of men, both now and in the

day of judgment, and to prepare heavenly mansions for all who were obedient to his commands?

Pepin, thus adjured, came again to the relief of the Romans, and compelled Aistolphus to lay the keys of the conquered cities on the altar of St. Peter.

On the death of Aistolphus, Desiderius succeeded to the throne of the Lombards, and subsequently Charlemagne became sole monarch of the Franks. We have already spoken of the causes of quarrel between the two kings, the breaking out of war between them, and its resulting in the entire destruction of the Lombard power. Toward the close of the campaign, Desiderius, having been completely defeated in the field, was compelled to shut himself up within the strongly fortified walls of Pavia. The city having been closely invested, and all the approaches to it secured, Charlemagne left the prosecution of the siege to his generals, and visited Rome. His approach and entrance combined the pomp and magnificence of an old Roman triumph with the sanctity of a religious ceremonial. At thirty miles distance from the city, the judges and senators met him, to offer him welcome and escort for the remainder of the journey. He reached Rome on Holy Saturday, 1st of April, 774. Whilst yet a mile from the gates, the Flaminian Way, by which he approached, was lined with Greek, Saxon, Lombard, and Spanish youths, and at the same place the noblest families in Rome attended him, equipped in common armour. Others of

tender years, together with the young maidens of the city, strewed flowers in his way, chanting as they did so, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." On meeting this triumphal procession, the king dismounted from his horse, and with his retinue entered the city on foot. The pope, attended by his suffragan bishops, awaited his arrival at the entrance of the church of St. Peter, which they entered together, and knelt side by side at the altar. It was remarked, however, that Charlemagne assumed the most honourable position, walking at the right hand with the pope on his left.* This may seem trivial and unimportant, but such trifles are of consequence, since they show that he undertook the defence of the city as its lord and ruler.

Whether Charlemagne had any political object in view in making this visit we cannot now determine. The pope, however, contrived to turn it to good account. He read to the young conqueror the grant of territory made by Pepin to the church, and urged him to imitate so pious an example. If we may believe the papal historians, a new grant was made, in which not only was the old one confirmed, but the greater part of the newly conquered kingdom of Lombardy was added.

It seems that when Charlemagne had returned to his own dominions, and escaped the seductions

* This resembles Napoleon's conduct when he met the pope. As the pontiff entered the carriage on one side, Napoleon entered it by the door on the other, so that there might be no loss of dignity on either side!

of the papal presence, he repented of the unthinking generosity which had led him to give away so valuable a territory, and he evinced no little reluctance to surrender it. The pope, therefore, began to ply him with the most earnest entreaties and adjurations. He reminds him "how formidable a creditor St. Peter must be, who is prince of the apostles and doorkeeper of heaven." "Truly good, mild, and excellent son, I implore, I entreat thee, to surrender that which thou didst promise to St. Peter, key-bearer of heaven, so that he may help and second thee with the Divine Majesty." These entreaties proving unavailing, the pope proceeded to urge the request by appealing to the ambition of Charlemagne, who aspired to be regarded as successor of the old Roman emperors. "As in the times of the blessed pontiff Sylvester, the holy catholic and apostolic church was elevated and honoured by the most pious emperor Constantine, of holy memory, and by him deemed worthy to possess authority in these western regions, so also in these your most happy times, let the holy church of God flourish and stand exalted more and more."

It is thus we hear for the first time of the famous donation of Constantine, by which, as was pretended, the city of Rome and the surrounding country, now known as the states of the church, or the patrimony of St. Peter, were ceded in perpetual sovereignty to the bishop of Rome. From the very important influence

which this pretended donation has had in the aggrandizement of the papacy, and from the apt illustration it presents of the dishonesty and fraud which so habitually characterize its proceedings, it will be desirable to give some account of this famous forgery.

About the year 634, a collection of papal and imperial decrees on ecclesiastical matters was compiled by Isidore of Seville. From the influential position and venerable character of the author, this collection, known as the Decretals of St. Isidore,* was held in high esteem. During the reign of Charlemagne, and just as the dispute respecting the surrender of the conquered territory began, another set of decretals appeared, bearing the same name, and professing to be the true, authentic, and complete Isidorean Decretals. Most of the things contained in the previous compilation were incorporated in the new one, but they were so garbled and interpolated that their meaning was entirely perverted, whilst very much of their contents was now foisted in and added for the first time. Amongst the new matter were the pretended donations of Constantine, in which it was asserted that the imperial city, the birthplace, the nursery, and the metropolis of the Roman power, was abandoned by the

* It was usual to add the word *peccator*, that is, sinner, after the name as a mark of humility. In the later and interpolated editions, *peccator* became corrupted into *mercator*, that is, merchant. An apt alteration, as Gibbon sarcastically remarks, since the few sheets of parchment sold for much wealth and power.

emperors, and by them given to St. Peter and the bishops of Rome his successors.

Now the mere novelty of this claim is sufficient of itself, even were there no other confirmatory evidence, to stamp it as a falsehood and a forgery. Is it possible, is it conceivable, that Rome, the ancient mistress of the world, should have been given away four hundred and fifty years previously, and yet the gift have been heard of in Charlemagne's reign for the first time? Would there have been no protest nor opposition on the part of a people, recently and partially converted from paganism, at the surrender of a city from which their glory and their very name sprang? Would there have been no exultation or rejoicing on the part of the Christians when they became possessed of the capital of the whole earth? Would the innumerable ecclesiastical writers have made no mention of the fact, that the metropolis of the world had become the domain of the church? Would Eusebius have passed it over in silence? If Constantine had given, would not Julian have reclaimed it? Would the popes have made no use of the fact in their constant controversies with the emperors during the whole intervening period? Must there not have been some exercise of sovereignty over the city, or at least some claim set up to it during the four hundred and fifty years in which the right is asserted to have been possessed? Yet there is not a vestige, not a shadow of a shade of any of these things, during

the whole period. The claim was absolutely and entirely new, and was utterly unheard of before. This one fact would suffice of itself to brand the donation as an impudent forgery.

But we are not left to this negative proof : there is abundant, direct, and positive evidence, that these decretals were not composed till some years, or even some centuries, after the date claimed for them, and that they were forged about the time when we first hear of them. The fraud was so clumsily contrived, and so ignorantly executed, that every page abounds with anachronisms and absurdities, which in a more critical and less credulous age must have caused its instant detection. The compiler made up his book by extracts from ecclesiastical documents, written very long after the date which he ascribed to his Decretals, mutilating them to suit his purpose, without taking the trouble, however, to remove the things in them which were inconsistent with the age in which they were said to have been written, without caring that there should be consistency, or congruity, or even an intelligible connexion, between the various parts of the same decree. Ancient bishops quote from a version of the Scriptures made long after their decease. Pagan emperors are described as defending the church, and Christian emperors as persecuting it. The pretended writers speak of events which happened, and persons who lived centuries after their own time. The Scriptures are mutilated and

misapplied in a manner which must excite either indignation at the effrontery or pity for the ignorance manifested. Thus, the language of the inhabitants of Sodom to Lot, in the ninth verse of the nineteenth chapter of Genesis, is quoted as the language of God, forbidding the interference of laymen in ecclesiastical affairs. The *animus* of the compilation may be conjectured from the fact, that the priests are represented as the apple of God's eye; whoever sinned against them sinned against God, as they were the representatives of God and Christ, and men were to see Christ in them; they were subject to no secular tribunal, but God had appointed them judges over all.*

Such were these famous pseudo-Isidorean Decretals—a forgery to which the popes gave their countenance, by which they profited, to which they affixed the seal of their infallibility, even if they were not themselves guiltily implicated in the fraud.† Through centuries of credulity, ignorance, and superstition, the dishonest and blasphemous fiction remained unchallenged, and it still stands incorporated with the authoritative traditions of that church, which amidst all its “lying wonders” and “deceivableness of

* *Vide* Neander's “Church History,” vol. vi. pp. 102—105.

† Dr. Doyle, one of the ablest modern advocates of the papacy, pities the simple-hearted and unsuspecting pontiffs, thus made the dupes of some wicked forger, who shamefully imposed upon their guileless simplicity. He does not, however, explain how infallibility could be deceived, nor how it comes to pass that the popes have not surrendered their ill-gotten gains, after their detection of the forged and fraudulent character of their title-deeds.

unrighteousness," can scarcely show anything more false and flagitious.

Whilst the pope was thus claiming authority over Italy, and urging Charlemagne to concede it to him, the bishops of Lombardy and the exarchate of Ravenna were protesting as loudly against such a course, representing that if he acceded to the pope's wishes it would only be robbing one church to give to another, and that their possessions and independence would all be swallowed up by the avarice and ambition of Rome. The dukes and counts who held office in Lombardy joined their bishops in this protest, and at the same time further complicated the quarrel by charging the pope with selling as slaves to the Saracens the peasantry on the estates which had been given up to him. Charlemagne wrote very indignantly to Adrian respecting this complaint brought against him, and, in the spring of the year 781, visited Rome to adjust matters. It seems probable, though by no means certain, that he now put the pope in possession of extensive estates round the city. In all the subsequent controversies between the papal and the imperial power, the pontiffs and their advocates appealed to a deed of gift which was alleged to be laid up in the archives of the Vatican. As the deed was never produced, however, we can know nothing of its nature or extent, and with the history of the forged donation of Constantine before us, we cannot feel entire confidence as to its existence at all. Of this we may be quite sure, that it

did not concede to the pope the *sovereignty* of the district in question. The assertions of the papal advocates that it did so are disproved by numerous facts. Charlemagne retained and exercised all his royal rights and prerogatives over the city and territory intact, and only surrendered the proprietorship of the soil into the grasping and avaricious hands of the papal see. The claim to independent sovereignty was a subsequent usurpation.

The concessions made by Charlemagne, so far from satisfying the avarice and ambition of Adrian, only stimulated them. He endeavoured, by the aid of the Franks, to extend his possessions on every hand, and with this design tried to involve his allies in broils with all the states of Italy. He especially coveted the duchy of Beneventum, and wrote to Charlemagne complaining of the conduct of Grimoald, its duke, and advising that he should still be detained a prisoner, and his territory conquered and divided : "Hasten to send such an army as shall conduce to the profit of our holy church, and to that of your royal excellency ; rest assured that I thus urge you, not from any avidity for those cities, but for the good of the holy church, and of your royal majesty." Charlemagne had, however, by this time discovered the selfish and revengeful character of the pope, notwithstanding his professions of humility and charity ; and refusing to be influenced by his advice, set Grimoald at liberty, and restored to him the duchy of Beneventum. Adrian, instead of tak-

ing his disappointment in good part, wrote an almost abusive letter to the emperor, reproaching him with having "spared a generation of vipers, which it behoved him to have crushed."

The conflicts of Charlemagne, so far as we have yet traced them, have been waged with the sword; we have now to see him enter on a fresh arena, and take up a new weapon—the pen, employing it, not in defence of the papacy, but in opposition to it.

In the year 787, a council was held at Nicea, in which it was decreed that "the sign of the cross, and images of Christ, the virgin, angels, and of holy and pious men, should be placed in the churches to be adored;" and the three hundred and fifty bishops assembled set the example of obedience to the decree by ordering an image to be brought into the place of meeting, where it received the adoration of all present. In order to protest against and counteract this idolatrous decree, Charlemagne composed, or ordered to be composed,* the treatise known as the *Quatuor Libri Carolini*. The tendency and spirit of the book may be inferred from the following extracts: "God alone is to be worshipped, he alone to be adored, he alone to be glorified. Of him the prophet says, 'His name alone is excellent,' *Psa. cxlviii. 13.* Rever-

* We say "composed, or ordered to be composed," because though the book is in substance the expression of the monarch's convictions, and though it is evident that many passages were dictated by himself, yet he must have received some assistance in its composition. The share which Alcuin had in its preparation has been probably over-estimated, as at the period of its publication (790) he was absent in England.

ence is likewise due to the saints, who, having overcome the devil, now reign with Christ, because they manfully laboured and suffered, in order that the church should come down to our times, and because they are able to assist the still struggling church with their prayers. But images can only be placed in churches without injury to the faith when adoration and worship of every kind are forbidden, and when they are employed either simply as ornaments of the edifice, or as memorials of the deeds of the pious dead ; or they may be absent altogether without injury to the faith, seeing that they can take no part in accomplishing our redemption. . . . Those who assert that images are *necessary*, even as memorials of holy things, plainly declare themselves to be spiritually blind, and they acknowledge that they have so bad a memory that without these things to remind them, they should forget the service of God and the love of the saints ; they confess, too, that they are unable to raise the eyes of their understanding heavenward, above the objects of sense, or to drink from the fountain of eternal life without the aid of that which is material and bodily. But the spirit of man ought to live in such close communion with Him in whose image it was created, as to be able to embrace Christ who is the sole image of spiritual truth ; and it is miserable infatuation to say that the spirit would leave him without the aid of these gross material memorials. The faith of Christians ought not to be dependent

upon these outward things, but to be rooted in the heart. . . . God who fills infinite space is not to be worshipped or prayed to under finite and material forms ; but his constant presence is to be enjoyed by the pure heart. . . . We Christians, who contemplate with unveiled face the glory of God, and into whose image we are changed from glory to glory, (2 Cor. iii. 18,) must no longer seek the truth by means of images and pictures ; we who, by His aid attain to a knowledge of the truth through faith, hope, and love, must not adopt such means as these."

It would be difficult to find the nature of true spiritual worship more clearly stated, and its obligations more distinctly asserted, than in this and many other passages which might be quoted, did space permit. It is, moreover, gratifying to observe, that though in one extract the intercession of the glorified saints is erroneously affirmed, and in other passages the duty of paying a reverential respect to their relics is admitted, yet everywhere, God in Christ is maintained to be the only proper object of worship, without the intervention of priestly mediators or material images, and by the direct approach of the redeemed and sanctified spirit to its God and Father.

A copy of the treatise was sent to Rome by Angilbert, abbot of Riquieri. The pope answered it to the best of his ability, but failed to convince the Franks. A synod was held at Frankfort in the year 794, to consider the

whole question. Legates from Rome advocated the papal doctrine, but without success. Image worship was indignantly and unanimously repudiated as a new and abominable heresy. By the second canon of the council they affirmed, that they were shocked "at the new doctrine that they were to worship images made of colour, or of inlaid work, as God or the Saviour. We utterly reject both the adoration and service of images, despising and condemning it by common consent."

Whilst Charlemagne thus resolutely and skilfully opposed the idolatrous and superstitious tendencies of the papal church, he showed his entire freedom from all bigotry by co-operating with the pope in his attempts to repress the Arian and Unitarian tendencies of the Spanish churches. A doctrine styled Adoptionism had sprung up, and attained considerable influence among them. From the meagre notices of it we possess, it seems to have originated in speculations as to the nature of the relationship between God the Father and the Son, it being asserted that Christ in his human nature was the Son of God, not essentially, but only by adoption. It seems that this doctrine, as originally propounded, and as held by its wisest and best advocate, Felix, bishop of Urgellis, was not designed to trench upon the Divinity of Christ, or the doctrine of the Trinity, but was merely a metaphysical attempt to explain them. But with the mass of its followers it soon came to be understood in an Arian or

even Socinian sense. It is not our purpose to follow out the course of this intricate controversy, but simply to state its most prominent facts. The pope tried his usual policy of coercion. Felix being invited to Rome was there imprisoned. In his dungeon he recanted; but on his liberation and return to his diocese, he relapsed into his heretical opinions. Charlemagne now interfered, and employed Alcuin to write to those bishops who had distinguished themselves by their reception and advocacy of the new doctrine. Felix wrote a very able and temperate treatise in reply, in which he professed himself open to conviction, but as yet unconvinced. This having been read to Charlemagne, he requested Alcuin to prepare an answer to it. To this Alcuin said, that for a single individual to take upon himself to pronounce upon a doctrine so novel and important as that now brought under consideration would be inconsistent with Christian humility. He therefore proposed that a copy of the treatise of Felix should be sent to the pope, the patriarch of Aquileia, the bishop of Orleans, and the bishop of Treves, and that each of them should be requested to prepare an answer to it independently of the others. If they agreed in their condemnation of it, and in their arguments against it, this would be strong proof of their common truth and of its falsity; but if they disagreed, then the language and arguments of each should be tested by an appeal to Scripture and the orthodox fathers. This proposal is very

remarkable, coming from so staunch an advocate of the papacy as Alcuin, implying as it does that even he attributed to the pope no authoritative and decisive voice in matters of faith.

The reply prepared by Alcuin and the other bishops was ultimately read to Charlemagne, who suggested some alterations in it, which were adopted. Felix, however, remained unconvinced by the combined efforts of royal and episcopal reasonings. Charlemagne, therefore, anxious for the restoration of peace and amity to the Frank churches, invited him to a conference with the orthodox bishops, where their differences of doctrine might be calmly and tranquilly discussed.

The proposal was accepted, and the conference held in the palace at Aix la Chapelle in the year 799. The gentle and pious conduct of Alcuin prepared the way for the reception of his arguments. Ultimately Felix confessed himself convinced,* and by his influence upwards of ten thousand persons returned into the bosom of the church—persons who, if the papal system of persecution had been persisted in, would doubtless have been repelled into the barren and dreary wastes of Arianism. Alcuin, speaking of the affair, modestly says : “ Divine

* It is, however, more than questionable whether he ever thoroughly and cordially abandoned the doctrine of Adoptionism. His conviction of its truth seems to have been shaken, and he consented, for the sake of peace, to keep silence upon what he felt to be a doubtful speculation.

grace visiting his heart, he confessed that he had been seduced into an unauthorized and false opinion."

We have dwelt somewhat at large on these two controversies, partly from their intrinsic importance, and partly from the evidence they afford of the deep interest which Charlemagne took in religious truth, and his determination to defend it against the encroachments of superstition on the one hand, and of rationalistic scepticism on the other.

During the course of these events, on the 25th December, 795, Adrian expired. He had filled the papal chair during the whole reign of Charlemagne, who seems to have sincerely lamented his death, and is said to have burst into tears when it was announced to him. On the day after the death of Adrian, Leo III. was elected his successor.

Immediately on his accession, the new pontiff despatched legates to Charlemagne bearing the keys and standard of the city in token of allegiance, and at the same time requesting that he would send officers "to administer the oath to the people of Rome that they would be faithful and submissive to him." This is a sufficient proof of itself that the pope was so far from claiming the sovereignty of Rome, and that the people were so far from admitting it, that both agreed in acknowledging Charlemagne as their temporal prince.

Four years after the elevation of Leo to the pontificate, the discontent of the Romans broke out into violent insurrection against him. On

the 25th April, 799, as the pope was walking at the head of a procession of clergy and penitents, he was seized by a band of conspirators, led on by the canon Pascal and the sacristan Campulus. They threatened to murder the feeble old man who had fallen into their hands, but, touched with pity for his infirmities and reverence for his office, they contented themselves with shutting him up in prison. His escape from their hands, which was effected by the aid of his chamberlain, was magnified into a miracle. It was, moreover, affirmed that his tongue had been cut out and his eyes plucked from their sockets, but that they were miraculously restored. The tidings of this outrage and the pope's escape, with all the marvellous embellishments, were communicated to Charlemagne, who was at that time assembling his troops at the sources of the Lippe to chastise some of the tribes beyond the Rhine. He despatched officers to receive the pope with due honour, and to bring him to Paderborn, where he awaited his arrival. It was the first time the bishop of Rome had crossed the Rhine or been seen so far northward. Charlemagne received him with due reverence, presented him to the homage of the assembled troops, heard his report of the affair and his protestation of entire innocence of the infamous charges brought against him, sent him back to Rome with a sufficient guard to protect him from further outrage, and promised to follow him as speedily as possible, to acquaint himself

with the truth of the case and render justice to both parties.

Having made a rapid tour of his dominions to insure peace during his absence, he reached Rome on the 24th November, 800, and at once convened a court, consisting of the Frank and Roman lords, and as many archbishops, bishops, and abbots as could be assembled. Having announced to them that his principal object in visiting Rome was to investigate the charges against the pope, he was about to proceed with the case when the whole clergy rose and said, that it was not competent for them to sit in judgment upon their ecclesiastical superior. The court was then broken up, and the proceedings stayed. Whether Charlemagne would have proceeded with the lay lords alone in the matter, we cannot tell, as the pope offered to exculpate himself and attest his innocence by oath, which he did in public, standing in the pulpit of St. Peter in the Vatican. The proceedings were thus quashed, and the principal enemies of Leo were either imprisoned or sent into exile.

It was on the occasion of this visit to Rome, and just one month after his arrival, that the pope crowned Charlemagne emperor of the Romans, as narrated in the first chapter of this volume. Having remained for three months longer, to adjust fully and finally the quarrels between the pope and the people, Charlemagne left Rome for the last time, travelled through Italy, visiting each town of importance in his

route; and having issued a new code of laws for his Italian subjects, which might prevent the recurrence of those disturbances between the Romans and Lombards, previously so incessant, he reached France toward the close of the year.

In thus tracing out the relations between Charlemagne and the papacy, we have glanced at some of those frauds and falsehoods by which "the man of sin" has succeeded in attaining wealth and power.

The same system of forgery and deceit was afterwards employed with equal success, in changing the mere proprietorship of those vast estates granted by Charlemagne into an independent sovereignty. Who can avoid contrasting this shameful history, in which the most sacred names and the most holy things were prostituted to the most selfish purposes and dishonest practices, with the history of Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"—Who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich"—Who counted it "more blessed to give than to receive?" Yet these men, who shrank from no crime in order to gratify their own ambitious and avaricious designs, professed to be His servants and vicegerents, to be acting under his immediate and infallible guidance, and to be consulting his sole glory. Or, contrast the course of these men with that of the apostle whose representatives and successors they professed themselves

to be. The one lesson taught by his life may be expressed in his own words, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for *filthy lucre*, but of a ready mind; *neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*" It would be difficult to imagine any contrast more striking and complete than that between Christ and these his pretended vicars, or Peter and his professed successors.

Yet even from this narrative of impiety and fraud we may learn some useful lessons. Nowhere else are we taught more emphatically the forbearance and long-suffering of God. If sin be in every case that abominable thing which he hates, it must be specially hateful to him when committed by those who minister at his altars, and who profess that in thus acting they are fulfilling his commands and seeking his honour. God is thus made to appear the patron of and the partaker in their sins. And this system of fraud has continued for ages, during which these impious men have arrogated to themselves the Divine name and authority, and claimed that reverence and submission which are due to God alone. Yet God has not awakened his thunders, has not answered them by fire, has not "consumed them with the breath of his mouth, nor destroyed them with the brightness of his coming." Truly he is "long-suffering and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

But since we know from the sure word of prophecy that a terrible consummation must be reached at last, since we are assured that He will ultimately come forth and avenge himself upon those who have thus polluted the high places of the church, prostituted his holy name to their dishonest purposes, and, in the garb, and under the profession, of sanctity, pursued their unholy designs, let us beware not to trespass upon his forbearance, and take warning lest "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," our hearts should be fully set in us "to do evil."

CHAPTER V.

THE PERSONAL CHARACTER, HISTORY, AND INFLUENCE OF CHARLEMAGNE.

Difficulty of fairly judging the private character of public men—Efforts of Charlemagne for self-culture—The means he adopted for its attainment—*Alcuin*—*Eginhardt*—Other learned men patronised by Charlemagne—The *Schola Palatina*—Charlemagne's attainments in general knowledge—Influence of the royal example—Patronage of obscure youths—Multiplication of books—Remarks on the beneficial influence of this—Cultivation of music—Introduction of the Roman style of architecture—Description of the royal palaces and farms—Promotion of commercial enterprise—Embassy to Persia—Manufactures—Attempts the formation of a ship canal through central Europe—Dress and daily life—Ridicules the foppery of his courtiers—Hoax played upon the Greek ambassadors—Rigid economy of time—Moral character—Personal appearance—Death.

WE have now sketched the public life of Charlemagne, and viewed him as a warrior, as a legislator, and in his relations with the papal church. *The king* has hitherto engaged all our attention—we have yet to see *the man*. The career of the monarch is not always a correct index to the character of the individual. National policy often compels him to appear before us under an aspect which does not really belong to him, and to conceal thoughts and feelings to which, in a private station, he would give free expression. The influence of circumstances will sometimes invest him with

an air of greatness, and prompt him to acts of excellence, when he is in reality neither great nor excellent ; just as an insignificant building, placed on a commanding elevation, and gleaming in the rays of the rising or setting sun, will often excite admiration which it does not deserve ; its position and circumstances at once blinding us to its defects, and surrounding it with an extrinsic magnificence. If we would truly estimate the character of those raised above us, and occupying the high places of the earth, we must approach them and examine their conduct when divested of the glare and glitter of royalty. We shall therefore in this chapter collect from the scanty records of the age, such facts as seem fitted to illustrate the private and personal character and history of Charlemagne. They will show that the man no less than the monarch is deserving of the epithet—great.

First in importance, as illustrative of his character, and as re-acting upon it, were his efforts after self-education. He threw the same intense and indomitable energy into this as into everything else that he attempted. Those who remember the efforts of their childhood in learning to write, "what labour dire it was and weary woe," will believe this, since Eginhardt, his affectionate and admiring biographer, says that, "late in life, he tried to learn the art of writing, but the preposterous attempt succeeded but badly, being commenced at too advanced an age to succeed." As a conse-

quence probably of his bad success in this "preposterous attempt," he continued down the close of life to confirm treaties, not by affixing his signature, but by stamping the parchment with his sword-hilt, saying as he did so, "I have sealed this treaty with the pommel of my sword, and I will maintain it with its point."

The means he employed for attaining education illustrated his perfect freedom from all narrow prejudice or jealousy. He felt the necessity of having living teachers both for himself and his subjects. Oral instruction must precede books and prepare the way for them. But France could not furnish such. Whilst the monarch could not write, few of his courtiers could read. Instead, therefore, of allowing national animosities and jealousies to prevent him from seeking help from foreign nations, he invited learned men from every country to which his influence extended, offering them the highest honours and richest rewards he could bestow if they would take up their abode at his court. Among those who accepted this invitation and shared his bounty were English, Goths, Burgundians, Spaniards, Saxons, and Lombards. He even commissioned the ambassadors whom he despatched to the famous Haroun al Raschid, the caliph of Bagdad, to inquire whether there were any persons at that learned court who would accept his hospitality.

Among the scholars of various nations who associated themselves with him, the most influential, and by far the most intellectually gifted

man of his age, was Alcuin, to whom frequent reference has been made in the preceding pages. From the very close connexion between Charlemagne and this illustrious Englishman, some notice of his life and character seems requisite here. In a previous volume of this series, however, (*Lives of Eminent Anglo-Saxons*,) there is so complete a sketch of his history, that we shall only give the briefest possible outline of his life, and refer our readers to that biography for ampler information.

He was born in the city of York, or in its neighbourhood,* some time in the year 735. The year of his birth thus coincides with that of the death of the venerable Bede, a man so similar in character and spirit, that, did we believe in the transmigration of souls, we might regard Alcuin but as the avatar, the re-appearance of his illustrious predecessor. He studied at York under Egbert and Aelbert, the scholars, and friends of Bede. Hence, doubtless, much of the similarity between them. Of the affection with which he regarded his teachers, we have a striking proof in the grateful and affectionate mention he makes of them in his poetical record of the bishops and saints of York. Of Aelbert he says:—

“ For to him Christ was love,
Meat, drink, yea Christ was all,
Glory, the way to joys above,
Hope that could every grief remove,
And life celestial.”†

* He has, however, been claimed as a native of Scotland.

† “ *Cui Christus, amor, potus, cibus, omnia Christus,
Vita, fides, sensus, spes, lux, via, gloria, virtus.*”

With such a teacher we cannot wonder at the simple faith and ardent love which were so signally displayed in the character of Alcuin. His rich stores of knowledge and clear vigorous intellect were no less remarkable than his piety.

Having been induced to settle in France, he speedily became the most intimate friend and trusted counsellor of Charlemagne. When compelled to separate from one another, as was sometimes the case, from the exigencies of the state, and the inability of Alcuin to travel so fast or so constantly as his imperial master, there seems to have been a constant correspondence maintained between them; Charlemagne writing to his "intellectual prime minister" on almost all matters of difficulty which arose either in his government or his studies. The letters which yet remain show how multifarious were the subjects on which the emperor thought and required information. His questions, indeed, embrace the whole sum of then existing knowledge,—grammar, geography, astronomy, etymology, music, chronology, etc., etc. Some of the Biblical inquiries which he proposed to "his most beloved teacher in the Lord Jesus Christ," as he was accustomed to call Alcuin, are very curious and interesting as proving how closely he studied that truth which could make him "wise unto salvation." He asks, for instance, why none of the evangelists record the hymn which they say the Lord and his disciples sang before they went out into the

garden of Gethsemane ; what was the nature and design of our Lord's transfiguration ; and to whom we are to understand the price of man's redemption was remitted.

The character of the man and the nature of the intercourse between the teacher and the royal scholar will perhaps be best illustrated by the two following extracts from their correspondence. The first is dated from the abbey of St. Martin, at Tours, to which Alcuin had retired from the fatigues of office and the infirmities of age. It was addressed to Charlemagne on his attaining his fifty-eighth birthday. "I long meditated," he says, "what present I could offer you which should be not only not beneath your dignity to accept, but which should also form some real addition to your wealth. For I could not rest satisfied that whilst others were laying costly offerings at your feet I should not present you with anything. At length, by the suggestion of the Holy Ghost, I bethought me of a present both suitable for me to offer and for you to accept? What indeed could be more worthy of you, than the divine books which I herewith send to your majesty, collected together and, to the utmost of my power, freed from inaccuracies? If I could have devised anything better I would have sent it to you with the utmost zeal for the promotion of your glory and prosperity." What present, indeed, could be more suitable from the subject to the sovereign than the word of God?

The second extract is from a letter in which

Alcuin consoles him for the recent loss of his queen : " Our Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, our safety, our consolation, has with his gentle voice commanded all who groan, being burdened, to come to him, saying, ' Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' What can be more sweet than this promise? What more blessed than this hope? Let each sorrowing spirit, let each contrite heart, come to him and find shelter in that Divine compassion. Let no one hide his wounds from that Physician who says, ' I kill and I make alive again, I wound and I heal.' How skilfully does our heavenly Father chastise his children that he may sanctify those for whose salvation he did not spare his own Son! Remember, that for thy sake He descended and suffered the things thou hast read in the Gospels, that he may prepare for thee a mansion in his Father's house."

Such correspondence is equally honourable to both parties; and one knows not whether most to admire the king who in that barbarous age could invite and prize, or the counsellor who could offer, such advice and consolation.

As Alcuin felt the infirmities of age creep upon him, he longed to retire from the busy world, and to devote the closing years of his life to meditation and prayer. Even in the full vigour of manhood, he had often felt the ceaseless activity required by Charlemagne to be burdensome, and now a profound weariness and dissatisfaction seized him. He repeatedly re-

requested his master to allow him to retire from court and live in seclusion. The emperor, however, knew too well the value of his trusted counsellor and friend to part with him willingly. At length, in the year 796, the solicitations of Alcuin prevailed, and the abbey of St. Martin at Tours was given him as a retreat. Even in his honourable retirement and repose he was not idle; he undertook the active superintendence of the monastery, he employed a number of young priests in copying manuscripts to enrich the library; he himself directed their labours, and he continued the work of education which through life he had felt to be his true vocation; and many of the young men, whom he trained in the school which he formed, grew up to play important parts in the world after he was gone. Charlemagne made many efforts to recall him to his side; but in vain. In answer to one such request he replied, "Grant, I pray you, that a weary man may repose himself, that he may daily pray for *you*, and that he may prepare himself by confessions and tears to appear before the eternal Judge."

In the year 801 he resigned all his honours, wealth, and engagements, and three years after he died, on the 19th of May, 804. History records few lives more usefully spent or more happily closed.

Next in influence and energy to Alcuin was Eginhardt. He was an Austrasian Frank, and belonged to that least civilized part of the nation who lived beyond the Rhine. He hence

speaks of himself as a barbarian, and apologizes for the defects of his Latinity, as arising from this cause. He was introduced by Alcuin to Charlemagne when young, and was speedily raised by the emperor to the post of secretary, and employed to superintend most of the public works carried on during his reign.

After the death of Charlemagne, Eginhardt continued in the service of Louis, his son and successor, but soon becoming disgusted with the feeble and superstitious character of the young prince, he sought and obtained permission to leave the court and retire to his estates. As he found old age creeping on, he, according to a custom very frequent in those ages, separated from his wife, and they retired, he to a monastery—she to a nunnery. The reason for this strange practice was the superstitious belief that whoever died in the habit and profession of one of the religious orders, was thereby fitted for and entitled to an immediate entrance into heaven. *She* died in the year 836, and he thus pathetically expresses his grief at her decease to his friend Lupus, abbot of Ferrières: “All my previous cares for my friends, or for myself, are nothing to me now. All sinks into nothing, all is effaced by this cruel sorrow—the death of my wife, my sister, my beloved companion and friend for so many years. It is a misery which cannot cease, for her memory is so deeply engraven on my heart that nothing can destroy it. What redoubles my grief, and aggravates my wounds is, that all my prayers and tears

have been unavailing, and all my hopes deceived. The words of those who attempt to console me only reopen my wounds, for they call upon me to support with calmness sorrows they do not feel, and in which they cannot point out the slightest source of contentment."

How differently do Alcuin and Eginhardt speak of death! The one can find no source "even of contentment," but his grief is bitter, uncontrolled, and inconsolable—the other, as we saw a few pages back, points out hopes and blessings even in bereavement itself. It is not enough to explain the contrast, as Eginhardt attempts to do, by saying that those who speak the language of resignation and cheerfulness are not themselves bereaved, and are endeavouring to console others under sorrows which they do not feel, because we find that Alcuin and those like-minded can give utterance to such feelings even when the blow has fallen upon themselves. The only adequate explanation is, that superstition fails to give confidence and support in the hour of trial, and will abandon us, as it abandoned Eginhardt, to "cruel sorrow" and "unavailing tears," whilst the strong faith in God and Christ which Alcuin possessed keeps us from sorrowing "even as others which have no hope," binds "up the broken hearted," and comforts "those that mourn." Scriptural and spiritual religion—an inestimable treasure at all times—proves its transcendent excellency and worth in the anguish of bereavement, and in the darkness of the "valley of the shadow of death."

Eginhardt survived his loss only three years, and died in 839, at the abbey of Seligstadt, which he had himself founded and richly endowed. Though his chief and characteristic excellence was his practical energy, and his co-operation with Charlemagne in the affairs of active life, yet his writings are of considerable value. The best known and most important of these, "The Life and Conversation of the most Illustrious Emperor Charles the Great," is the source whence almost all our information of the personal history of its hero is drawn.

Whilst the two just named were the chief coadjutors with Charlemagne in his work of restoring learning and civilization, there were many others associated with them of less celebrity indeed, but of scarcely less energy. Of one of these, Paul Warnefrid, or as he is often called, Paulus Diaconus, it was said, in the extravagant and affected style of the age, "that you might discern Homer in his Greek, Virgil in his Latin, and Philo in his Hebrew; his poems you would take for those of Horace, and his eloquence for that of Tibullus." Of another, Rabanus Maurus, it was said in the same spirit of extravagant and affected eulogy, that "Germany had not produced his equal, nor Italy his superior." About these "bright particular stars" there gathered a galaxy of others of inferior importance, — Angilbert, Leidrade, Smaragde, Benedict of Aniane, Theodulph, Adalhard, Amalaric, Agobard, etc. It was in association with these admirable men, whom he

had attracted to his court and attached to his person, that Charlemagne addressed himself to his great enterprise of gaining and diffusing knowledge.

Among the most important agencies which he employed for self culture was the *Schola Palatina*, or School of the Palace. It consisted of the emperor, his family, the chief officers of state, and those learned men whom he constituted his personal attendants. It accompanied him as he travelled from place to place. Alcuin was its president, and among the fellow-scholars of Charlemagne are enumerated his children and grand-children, his sisters, several bishops, archbishops, and royal councillors. They assumed feigned names, taken from sacred or classical antiquity. Charlemagne was styled David; Alcuin took the name of Albinus Flaccus; Angilbert that of Homer; Fredegis that of Nathaniel; Gisla, the daughter of Charlemagne, that of Lucia—and so on. It has been generally supposed that this adoption of fictitious names originated in the pedantry of the age. Without denying that this may have had something to do with it, a much more probable explanation is found in the fact that the emperor sat among the scholars, whilst his subjects were the teachers. The use of their proper names and titles would have kept constantly before them the inconsistencies and discrepancies of their relative positions, and thus have destroyed that perfect freedom of intercourse requisite for the successful management

of the school. By the adoption of these playful pseudonyms this inconvenience was avoided: laying aside for the time the titles of authority on the one hand, and professions of subjection on the other, they met on the common ground of teachers and learners. What more impressive spectacle does history present than that of this stalwart old warrior, this potent monarch, whose fame was spread, and whose power was feared from Arabia to Britain, sitting among his children and grandchildren, with them to listen to the instructions of the wisest and best among his subjects ?

As we have already intimated, the instruction given was for the most part oral. This was necessitated both by the paucity of books, and by the inability of the majority of the scholars to read. The following specimen preserved to us in the writings of Alcuin, is a very curious illustration of the conversational and catechetical nature of the teaching. The interlocutors are Alcuin himself and Pepin, a son of Charlemagne, who was then probably about sixteen years of age :—

“PEPIN.—What is life ?

ALCUIN.—Happiness for the happy, misery for the miserable, the expectation of death for all.

PEPIN.—What is death ?

ALCUIN.—An inevitable event, a doubtful journey, a subject of tears to the living, the thief of men.

PEPIN.—What is man ?

ALCUIN.—The slave of death, a passing traveller, a guest in his own home.

PEPIN.—What is sleep?

ALCUIN.—The image of death.

PEPIN.—What is man's liberty?

ALCUIN.—Innocence.

PEPIN.—What is the body?

ALCUIN.—The abode of the soul.

PEPIN.—What is the day?

ALCUIN.—A call to labour.

PEPIN.—What is the dream of the waking?

ALCUIN.—Hope.

PEPIN.—What is friendship?

ALCUIN.—The similarity of souls.

PEPIN.—What is faith?

ALCUIN.—The assurance of unknown and wonderful things."

The catechism, or conversation, thus proceeds through more than a hundred questions and answers similar in kind to those selected. "Clearly," says Guizot, "as a means of education these conversations are altogether and strangely puerile; but as an indication and commencement of intellectual movement they merit all attention; they evince that eager curiosity with which the mind in its crude infancy directs its gaze upon all things, and takes pleasure in every unexpected combination and every ingenious idea; a tendency manifested equally in the childhood of individuals and the childhood of nations."

Charlemagne's attainments in general knowledge seem to have been very considerable for

a man of that age. Eginhardt says of him : " During his meals, he always listened to some narrative of what had happened, or was read to by the officer appointed for that purpose. His favourite books were histories, and the exploits of the ancients ; he was likewise very partial to the writings of St. Augustine, and especially to his " City of God." He was eloquent, and could express with facility everything he wished. He did not confine himself to his own tongue, but knew Latin so well, as to be able to speak it with the utmost ease. He understood Greek better than he could speak it. He carefully studied the liberal arts, and very much respected and richly rewarded those who were skilled in them. In his old age, he learned grammar from Peter of Pisa. He also spent much time and trouble in learning rhetoric, logic, and especially astronomy. In addition to these, he acquired the knowledge of arithmetic, and applied himself with much care to fix the course of the stars." This is, indeed, a very extraordinary list of attainments for a Frank of the eighth century, and when we take into account his military and legislative achievements, it seems almost incredible. If his history had no other value, it would deserve to be studied as an unsurpassed instance of the successful pursuit of knowledge under difficulties.

The example thus set by the monarch could not be without its influence on his subjects. When they saw him whom they had so often followed to battle and to victory, who, on so

many a hard-fought field had proved himself the glory of the Franks, and the terror of their enemies, thus devoting every moment he could win from the cares of state and the toils of war to the acquisition of learning, it was reasonable to anticipate for them, that they would feel, or at least affect, a similar zeal. And though, as the result proved, this educational movement was but superficial and transient, yet it left some permanent results behind it. It did away with that contempt for learning as effeminate and servile, which had characterized the preceding ages, and introduced in its place a respect for it, which in those mediæval times often led the rude and illiterate knights to protect the feeble and helpless scholar, and prompted the foundation and endowment of many of those schools to which the youth of Europe still flock for education.

Whilst Charlemagne lived, he was careful by every means in his power to encourage the new-born desire for learning, and to provide the means by which it might be supplied after his own decease. Of the establishment of schools by his royal decrees in all the monasteries and churches throughout his empire, we have already spoken. We have now only to allude to his personal encouragement and support of them. He seems constantly to have visited the schools which lay in the route of his incessant journeys, that he might acquaint himself with the character of the teachers and scholars, and promote any whom he found deserving. Those

who distinguished themselves by their aptness in teaching or diligence in learning, he would frequently elevate to some post about the court, and admit them to the school of the palace. This was the case with Eginhardt, who was, after Alcuin, the most trusted friend and useful servant at the court of Charlemagne. The monk of St. Gall narrates the following curious anecdote of the monarch in connexion with his patronage of learning : " Charlemagne used to bring up in the school of the palace many youths, whose learning and industry he afterwards employed in his service. One of these pupils, who was in poor circumstances, he made clerk and precentor of his chapel. One day they communicated to the most prudent emperor the fact, that a certain bishop was dead, whereupon he asked whether he, by deeds of charity, had sent any of his property before him into another world ; ' Only about two pounds of silver, sire,' answered the messenger. The young man I just named, standing by, was unable to repress his vivacity, and cried out in spite of himself, in the king's presence, ' What a light viaticum for so long a journey !' After thinking silently for a moment or two, Charlemagne, the most prudent of men, said to the young priest, ' What say you ? if I were to give you this bishopric, would you take care to make better provision for this great journey ?' The other hastening to swallow these words, like grapes ripe before their time falling into his half-open mouth, threw himself

at the feet of the king, and said, 'My lord, it is for the will of God and your power to decide.' 'Hide yourself,' said the king, 'behind the arras, and you shall see what rivals you have for the post.' As soon as the death of the bishop was known through the court, the officers of the palace, always on the watch for the downfall or death of one another, set the favourites of the emperor to work to secure, each for himself, the vacant post. But he, stedfast to his purpose, refused them all. At last, queen Hildegarde sent the chief men of the kingdom, and then came herself, to solicit the bishopric for her chaplain. The king received her kindly, heard her graciously, but replied, that he should never forgive himself if he deceived the young priest. After the fashion of all women, when they wish to make their own wishes triumph over the will of their husbands, the queen concealed her anger, lowered the tone of her naturally harsh voice, and endeavoured to soften her husband by her caresses, saying to him, 'Dear prince, why should you throw away this bishopric by giving it to such a mere child? I pray you, my dear master, my joy and my support, give it to that devoted servant of yours, my chaplain.' At these words, the young man behind the arras, cried out in a most lamentable voice, but without quitting his hiding-place, 'Lord king, stand firm, let no one take out of thy hands the power given thee by God.' Then the brave and truthful prince commanded the young man to come out

from behind the curtain, and said to him, 'Receive this bishopric, but take care to send before you and myself into the other world great alms, and a sufficient viaticum for that long journey from which no one returns.'"

M. Guizot quotes another anecdote from the same source which may appropriately find a place here. "Another prelate was dead. Charlemagne gave the succession to a young man who, well contented with his appointment, prepared to set out and to take possession of it. His servants brought him a very quiet sort of horse, such as suited his episcopal gravity, and placed a stool to help him into the saddle. But he, indignant at their treating him as though he were infirm, kicked the stool from him, and sprang into the saddle with such vigour, that he almost fell over on the other side. The king saw all this from the palace, and calling to the man, said to him, 'My brave man, thou art lively, active, quick, and hast a strong foot. Thou knowest we are incessantly troubled with a multitude of wars, and have need of a priest just such as thou art for our suite; remain with us, therefore, and be our companion in our fatigues, as thou can'st mount thy horse so readily.'"

The want of books presented a difficulty in the way of education scarcely less than that of living teachers. Valuable and necessary as the labours of the latter were, yet the former could not be dispensed with. But at that time they were not to be had. Of the dearth of books in France, the following fact out of a

multiplicity of others, will suffice as proof. Lupus, bishop of Ferrières, wrote to Benedict, then pope, requesting the loan of the Commentaries of St. Jerome, and Donatus, Cicero de Oratore, and the Institutes of Quintilian, saying, that no complete copies of them existed in France, but only fragments. To appreciate the force of this statement, we must remember that these treatises were then regarded as text books.*

Charlemagne addressed himself with his usual energy to meet this want. He caused a *scriptorium*, or writing-room, to be established in the most considerable monasteries, where the monks employed themselves in making copies of such books as they possessed or could borrow. Many of the transcripts thus made were of the most exquisite beauty, both in the writing and the illuminations. The abbeys of Fontenelle, of Rheims, and of Corvey, especially distinguished themselves by the number, accuracy, and beauty of their manuscripts.

Alcuin, foremost in every good work, was not behindhand in this. He not only encouraged and superintended the labours of others, but himself set the example. We have already quoted a letter which he sent to Charlemagne, with a revised and corrected copy of the Scriptures. Whilst his chief attention was directed

* It is a striking proof of the much greater advance which England had made, that Alcuin repeatedly requested permission to visit his native country, and procure thence copies of the treatises which he stood in most need of.

to the correction and multiplication of copies of the word of God, and religious treatises, it was not confined to these. He seems to have edited (if we may use so modern a term in speaking of these ages) the plays of Terence; and, in conjunction with the emperor, to have caused the old German songs and poems, which had been handed down by oral tradition, but were then being rapidly forgotten, to be diligently collected and committed to writing. It is to this fact that we are indebted for the preservation of the *Nibelungen lay*, the oldest and most interesting relic of mediæval literature.

Charlemagne himself, with the indomitable energy and activity which characterized him, took part in this work of reproducing manuscripts. Thegaw, in his *Life of Louis*, the son and successor of Charlemagne, says, that "the emperor, shortly before his death, by the aid of certain learned Greeks and Syrians, corrected most carefully a copy of the Gospels." This reminds us of the enactment of the Jewish law, that the king should copy it out with his own hand, Deut. xvii. 18—20.

In order to provide materials for the use of the innumerable copyists thus set to work, a singular compromise was effected with the clergy of the day. It had been enacted that they should abstain from taking part in hunting or any similar field sports, on the ground that it was manifestly unbecoming in those whose office it was to give eternal life to men, to find their pastime in putting animals to death. But

finding the habit too inveterate to be entirely interdicted, Charlemagne, in a subsequent decree, compromised the matter, by permitting them to hunt, provided they would employ all the skins of the animals slain in the chase in replenishing and repairing their libraries.

The zeal and activity thus displayed in the reproduction of manuscripts has conferred a twofold benefit upon all succeeding ages. In the first place, many invaluable productions of ancient genius were rescued from the extinction of which they were on the very verge. In another century they would have been lost for ever—lost as completely as those of the great oriental nations of which scarcely a vestige remains. It is very much due to the copyists of that age that the literature of Greece and Rome did not share the same fate, and that some priceless fragments and relics of ancient genius have escaped the wreck, and floated down to us on the stream of time. All who are able to appreciate the immense benefits conferred upon subsequent ages by these remains of classical antiquity, and who know the mighty influence they exerted in the literary and religious awakening and revival of the fifteenth century, will see in this interposition a providential arrangement, preserving for us, amidst the barbarism of the dark ages, the productions of ancient learning. A second, and yet more inestimable benefit, which calls for yet intenser gratitude, has been conferred upon us by the collation and correction of the sacred

text. By the labours of those learned and devout men it was purified from the blunders of ignorant copyists ; ancient manuscripts and accurate transcripts were eagerly sought after ; pleasure was taken by the various monasteries in the elegance and correctness of the copies they produced ; and hence, in conjunction with other providential agencies, we have now the means of acquiring the correct text of the Scriptures.

In ascribing the preservation of these remains of classical and sacred antiquity to a providential interposition, we are met by an objection which it may be well briefly to consider. It may be asked, Why was this inroad of barbarism permitted at all ? Why did God permit the productions of ancient science, literature, and art to be thus swept away and all but annihilated, so that the portion of them which we now possess, in comparison with what has been lost, is but as the scattered fragments flung on shore from the wreck of some richly freighted vessel, which has sunk with its cargo in the fathomless ocean ? If we ought to be grateful for the small portion saved, how shall we account for the far greater amount lost ? It would be difficult to state this more clearly, or answer it more adequately than in the words of a distinguished American writer, who says, " Scholars and artists have mourned for ages over the almost universal destruction of the works of ancient genius. I suppose that many a second-rate city, at the time of Christ, pos-

essed a collection of works of surpassing beauty, which could not be equalled by all the specimens now existing, which have been yet discovered. The Alexandrian library is believed to have contained a greater treasure of intellectual riches than has ever since been hoarded in a single city. These we know have all vanished from the earth. The Apollo Belvidere, and the Venus de' Medici, stand in almost solitary grandeur, to remind us of the perfection to which the plastic art of the ancients had attained. The Alexandrian library, as we know, furnished fuel for years for the baths of the illiterate Moslems. I used frequently myself to wonder why it had pleased God to blot out of existence these magnificent productions of ancient genius. It seemed to me to be strange that the pall of oblivion should thus be thrown over all to which man in the flower of his age had given birth. But the solution of the mystery is found, I think, in the remains of Herculaneum and Pompeii. We there discover that every work of man was so penetrated by corruption, every production of genius was so defiled with uncleanness, that God, in introducing a better dispensation, determined to cleanse the world from the pollution of preceding ages. As, when all flesh had corrupted his way, he purified the world by the waters of a flood, so, when genius had covered the earth with images of sin, he overwhelmed the works of ancient civilization with a deluge of barbarism, and consigned the most splendid monu-

ments of literature and art to almost universal oblivion. It was too bad to exist; and he swept it away with the besom of destruction." If this representation be true—and that it is so can scarcely be questioned—not only are we justified in ascribing to a providential interposition the preservation of some remains of classical antiquity, but no less so in tracing up to the same cause the destruction of so much more.

The efforts of Charlemagne for the civilization of his subjects were not confined to the diffusion of mere scholastic learning; he fully appreciated the influence of commerce, and of the fine and useful arts, in elevating and refining a people. He discovered that it was vain to attempt to repress the rude and barbarous customs, the warlike and predatory habits of the Franks, unless he could open some fresh outlets for their energies; that it was better to draw off the stormy waters along some peaceful channels, than merely to pen them up within precarious limits and embankments. We proceed to give some instances and illustrations of his efforts to introduce the refining and civilizing influence of art and commerce among his people.

He appears himself to have practised poetry and music, and to have made many attempts to improve and cultivate the taste for the latter among the Franks. The psalmody and sacred music previously in use among them seems to have been of the coarsest and rudest

description. "The Franks," says a chronicler, "with their barbarous voices, could not utter the warbling sounds and soft cadences, and varied melodies of the Romans. They seemed rather to gulp their sounds than to utter them." When at Rome, in the year 786, Charlemagne was much struck with the difference between the church music of the Italians and that of his own countrymen. He perceived how coarse and rude was that to which he was accustomed, when compared with the sublime and refined harmonies which he now heard. He, therefore, requested the pope to allow some of his most skilful musicians to accompany him on his return. His request was granted, and Theodore and Benedict were sent into France, with a copy of the Gregorian antiphonal. The intercourse of the rival singers was, as usual, of the most discordant character. The Franks refused to adopt the Roman mode of chanting the service, maintaining that their own was better; whilst the new teachers said that their scholars were "as rude and uncultured as brute beasts." Charlemagne, overhearing the quarrel, summoned both parties into his presence to a trial of skill. This only confirmed his preference for the Italian mode. He, therefore, commanded it to be adopted throughout his dominions, and established two singing schools, the one at Soissons the other at Metz, where it was taught.

The attention of Charlemagne was directed to architecture as well as to music, by the mani-

fest superiority of that in Italy to any which existed in France. It seems probable that the Franks, like the Saxons, built their houses at this period almost entirely of wood, and the royal palaces differed only from the dwellings of the common people in their greater extent, and the larger number of slaves attached to them. The graphic description given by Thierry of one inhabited by Lothaire, in a previous century, is equally applicable to those occupied by Charlemagne. "A few leagues from Soissons, on the banks of a small river, stands the village of Braine. This was one of the immense farms where the Frankish kings held their court. The royal habitation had none of the military aspect which distinguished the castles of the middle ages; it was a large building, surrounded with porticos, in the Roman style, sometimes composed of carefully polished wood, and ornamented with statues not altogether wanting in elegance. Round the principal body of the building were disposed the lodgings of the officers of the palace, whether barbarian or of Roman origin, as well as those chiefs of the tribes who, together with their warriors, in accordance with the German custom, had entered into *truste* with the king, that is to say, had made an especial engagement of vassalage and fidelity." "Other houses, of meaner appearance, were occupied by a large number of families, both the men and women of which exercised all manner of trades, from that of the goldsmith and armourer to that of the weaver

and tanner ; from embroidery in silk and gold to the coarsest preparations of flax and wool. Most of these families were Gallic, born on that portion of territory which the king had adjudged to himself by right of conquest, or brought by violence from some neighbouring town, to colonize the royal domain. Buildings for agricultural purposes, such as stables, sheepfolds, and barns, with the hovels of the husbandmen, and the huts of the serfs, completed the royal establishment, which exactly resembled, though on a larger scale, the villages of ancient Germany. In the very site of these palaces of the Frank kings there was something which recalled the scenery beyond the Rhine ; most of them stood on the outskirts, and some in the very centre of these vast forests, since mutilated by civilization, but of which we still admire the remains. It was there that the king kept, in a secret apartment, in triple-locked chests, his treasures, consisting of gold coins, vases, and precious jewels. It was there also that he exercised his royal power. It was there that he assembled the chiefs and bishops from the towns, received ambassadors from foreign states, and presided over the great assemblies of the Franks, which were followed by those feasts, traditional among the Teutonic races, at which wild boars and deer were served up whole on spits, and staved barrels occupied the four corners of the hall. When not employed in war, the king went from one of these palaces to another, from Braine to Attigny,

from Attigny to Compiègne, from Compiègne to Verberie, consuming all the provisions he found ; hunting, swimming, or fishing, with his followers." In these abodes of rude and barbarous magnificence dwelt the Frank kings. Had Charlemagne seen nothing better, he would, doubtless, have remained contented with these, as his ancestors had done for so many generations ; but he visited Italy, and the ruins of ancient Rome, inagificent even in decay, could not but excite the monarch's admiration. He gazed with wonder at the mighty works reared by these old masters o the world—bridges, aqueducts, villas, basilicas, military entrenchments—the products and homes of military power, patrician luxury, and commercial enterprise ; and he determined to erect such upon the soil of France. Of the palaces which he built in imitation of those he had admired in Italy, two are specially mentioned, as distinguished by unusual beauty, those at Ingleheim and Aix la Chapelle. The latter of these, from its extent and splendour, was popularly styled Little Rome. For its erection, he obtained from the pope a grant of such marbles and mosaics as he needed from the ancient palaces and basilicas of Rome and Ravenna. Were the fact less adequately attested, we might have doubted whether even the energy of Charlemagne could have succeeded in conveying these massive blocks and columns with their delicate carving and tracery to so great a distance. Little did

the Roman emperors and patricians suppose, when they reared these stately domes, that at some future day, they would only afford quarries whence the descendants of those rude chiefs, whom their legions were employed in quelling, would draw materials for erecting palaces, amidst what was then the primeval forest on the banks of the Rhine.

The palaces which he thus erected and adorned, Charlemagne surrounded with farms, gardens, and vineyards, which were cultivated under his special superintendence. It is said that he stocked them with exotic plants, and strange animals, either collected by himself or sent to him by foreign potentates, and that he was careful to introduce into them all those better modes of agriculture which he observed elsewhere.*

That he set a high value upon commerce is very evident. He sought to open commercial intercourse and relations between his own subjects and the most distant nations. With the Slavons, who peopled the coasts of the Baltic, he established a trade in furs and slaves; and with the Greeks in works of art, the precious metals, and articles of luxury. He even sent ambassadors to the distant court of Persia. They were absent four years, and only one of them, Isaac, a Jew, returned alive. He was accompanied by envoys from Haroun al Raschid, bringing as presents from the greatest monarch of the east to the greatest monarch of the west,

* Menzel's *History of Germany*, vol. i. p. 256.

an elephant trained to the performance of many wonderful feats of strength and skill; fine silks and cloths from the looms of Tabreez; a magnificent tent; a water clock, which struck the hours, and was adorned with automatic figures, which seems to have been regarded by the simple-minded Franks as the work of magic; the standard of Jerusalem, and the keys of the holy sepulchre.

Manufactures were not altogether neglected, though they occupied less attention and were regarded as beneath the dignity of freemen. The only artificers of the period were women and slaves. To the female part of the community, Charlemagne set an example of diligence by making "his daughters accustom themselves to spin wool, and hold the distaff and spindle, and in short employ themselves in all the avocations of the time, so that idleness should not corrupt them."*

Among the most extraordinary projects of this remarkable man, was one for the junction of the Baltic and the Black Sea, by means of a ship canal. In the year 793, the Saxons, the Lombards, and the Saracens, were all up in arms against him. As he was thus assailed on three sides at once, and could not tell which attack would prove most serious, he despatched an army under one of his generals to each of the threatened frontiers, whilst he, gathering a strong body of troops as an army of reserve, took up a position in the centre, ready to bear

* Eginhardt, *Vita Caroli Magni*, c. xix.

down at once upon the point where his presence was most needed. In the neighbourhood of his encampment, branches from the Danube and the Rhine approach within a few miles of each other. He at once perceived the advantage which would accrue to Europe if, by uniting these two, he could make a passage for ships from the Baltic to the Euxine, and thence into the Mediterranean. Indolence was insufferable to himself, and he knew it would be most injurious to his troops. He therefore employed them during this period of constrained inaction in commencing a canal, three hundred feet broad, from the one river to the other. The work went on rapidly for some time, but the nature of the ground, boggy in some parts and rocky in others, presented insuperable obstacles to the defective engineering of that day. Heavy rains followed by violent floods burst the banks he had constructed, and swept away a great part of the works. He was, therefore, compelled to abandon the great enterprise, nor did he ever find opportunity to renew the attempt. The traces of the excavations yet remain; and recently, after the lapse of a thousand years, it has been proposed to attempt the completion of the work thus adventurously begun.

Whilst Charlemagne was thus anxious to benefit his countrymen by introducing among them the learning, arts, and commerce of foreign nations, he did not lose the simplicity and plainness, both of manners and costume, which had always characterized the Franks.

Whilst he aspired to emulate the more advanced learning and civilization of other countries, he never attempted to merge his nationality in theirs. "He always wore," says Eginhardt, "the dress of his own country, that of the Franks. Foreign costumes, however handsome they might be, he held in great contempt, and he allowed no one to wear them in his presence. Twice only, at Rome—once at the request of Adrian, and once at that of Leo—he consented to assume the Roman dress. On ordinary days, his clothes differed but little from those worn by the common people." The monk of St. Gall tells an amusing anecdote illustrative of this. Observing the young nobles of his court affecting the Italian costume, and coming before him clad in costly silks and furs, instead of the plain homely German dress, which he himself always wore, he one winter morning invited them to accompany him to the chase, without giving them time to change their dresses for others more suited to the season and the sport. Very soon their garments were torn to tatters by the thickets, and drenched with the rain, which was falling fast. On their return, he simply took off his old cloak of otter skin, which he always wore, wrung out the wet, and replaced it on his shoulders; they gathered around the fire to dry their tattered and dripping attire. This completed the destruction of their dresses, which now shrivelled up with the heat. The emperor then calling the young men to him, upbraided them for daring to appear before him

in such beggarly attire, and dismissed them to their homes.

When occasion seemed to require it, however, he could lay aside his Frankish simplicity, and assume the magnificence of Constantinople or Rome. One such instance is recorded when the ambassadors of Nicephorus, the emperor of the east, visited his court to negotiate a treaty of alliance. On their arrival in France, they found Charlemagne, as usual, absent on a campaign. They followed, and overtook him in his encampment on the banks of the Saal. Their arrival had been expected, and prepared for. Charlemagne, aware how much importance the Greeks attached to outward pomp, and knowing, too, that they expected nothing but the rude simplicity of a barbarous camp, determined to surprise them by a display of magnificence and an assumption of dignity, which should eclipse even that to which they were accustomed at Constantinople. A pavilion was erected, and fitted up with unusual splendour. The ambassadors, who were prepared for nothing of the kind, were ushered in by the appointed officers, and were about to prostrate themselves before a person gorgeously attired and seated in a chair of state. They were checked, however, and told that this was only the master of the horse. They were then conducted into an inner chamber, still more magnificently decorated, and were prostrating themselves before another person more sumptuously dressed than the first; but, he proved to be only the count Palatine. The

same scene was repeated in the successive apartments of the steward and chamberlain; all of whom remained seated as the ambassadors passed. Thus, their impatience and expectation were heightened by repeated disappointments, till at length the doors of the royal presence chamber were thrown open, and the monarch himself was discovered dressed in his own simple costume, though surrounded by the foreign magnificence and pomp which he so heartily despised.

In his mode of life, he was as plain and simple as in dress. "He was abstemious in his food, but still more so in his drink. In fact, he had great horror of drunkenness in every one, but much more so in himself or those around him. As to his food, he could not so easily abstain from it, and often complained that fasting was hurtful to his health. He very rarely gave banquets, but when he did so, it was to a great number of persons at once. Generally his table was served with only four dishes, besides the roasted joint, which he preferred to all other meat, and which his huntsmen used to serve up to him on the spit. During the meal, he listened to some narrative, or to his reader. In the course of his repast, he scarcely drank three times. In the summer, he would eat some fruit, and having drunk again, would repose for two or three hours. During the night, he used not only to wake, but to rise three or four times. While he dressed he admitted his friends, and, if any lawsuit required his

attention, he then heard it and pronounced sentence, as though on the judgment seat. At the same time, he assigned to every one the work they must do in the course of the day." In this passage, we are furnished with the explanation of his having been able to accomplish so much, and in so many ways. It was by the wise distribution and rigid economy of his time. It is evident, that every hour of every day had its assigned duty ; that his vast energies were not suffered to go to waste through misdirection or uncertainty of purpose. Not only was he active, but active according to a previously arranged plan and rule. Perhaps no man has ever accomplished much without this. It is painful to reflect upon how much capability for usefulness has been rendered unproductive, how much activity has been wasted, from vagueness of purpose and indefiniteness of aim. How many do we see who have activity without action, and motion without progress ! The wheels may spin round, and yet the carriage not advance. The butterfly flitting here and there, visits far more flowers, and traverses a far wider space than the bee ; yet with what poor results ! It is not, then, activity only, but activity rightly directed, that constitutes the secret of employing time well.

To complete our estimate of the character of Charlemagne, it now remains that we consider his personal morality. This was irreproachable with a single exception. In many of the passages quoted, his temperance and inte-

grity have been applauded by those who knew him intimately. His possession of these virtues seemed the more remarkable in that age, and among that people, since they were almost unpractised, at least by laymen.* That which is so lamentably common when barbarism comes into contact with civilization, had happened to the hordes who took up their abode within the limits of the old empire; they lost their ancient simplicity whilst they retained their rudeness; they caught the vices whilst they rejected the refinements of the conquered people. To this, however, Charlemagne formed a noble exception. He retained all his old Frankish simplicity and temperance, whilst he aspired after the civilization of Rome. Another characteristic, which excited yet more wonder among his rude warriors, was his parental tenderness. They, like most other races just emerging from barbarism, felt that military fortitude required the repression of all emotion. It was, therefore, with wonder that they saw him profoundly affected by domestic bereavements, and his admiring biographer can hardly abstain from blame and condemnation when, under such circumstances, he was seen even to shed tears.

The otherwise irreproachable morality of Charlemagne has, however, one exception; the purity of his life is stained by one sad and serious blot—the sin of his age and race—con-

* See in proof of this Thierry's *Narratives of the Merovingian Era*.

cubinage and polygamy. Though his violations of the law of chastity have been greatly exaggerated by Gibbon and some others, yet the fact is unquestionable. It would ill become us to excuse or palliate conduct so emphatically denounced and condemned by the word of God. It behoves us, on the contrary, to uphold God's law in its unswerving and unwavering integrity, as just, and holy, and good. Tried by that standard, Charlemagne is without excuse. Yet is it due to him, when taking merely a *historical* view of his character, and comparing him with his contemporaries, to remember that these offences in his age were flagrantly and fearfully common, and in the corrupted state of morals that prevailed, were not regarded as possessing that criminality, with which a more perfect acquaintance with Scripture has deservedly invested them.

These violations of the Divine law, on the part of Charlemagne, did not pass without their appropriate and invariable punishment. Whilst he lived his family was rent asunder, and very often the peace of his kingdom was disturbed, by broils between his legitimate and illegitimate children; and, after his death, the feuds between the various branches of his family tended very much to that disruption of his empire which brought back the reign of anarchy to Europe.

On one occasion Pepin, his son by Himiltruda, driven desperate by the insults of Fastrada, the queen, and her children, fled from the court.

He was popular among many of the Frank lords, who, remembering that Charles Martel had been born out of wedlock, deemed that no disgrace. They ardently espoused his cause, and conspired to murder the lawful children of their king, and compel him to acknowledge Pepin as his lawful heir. This conspiracy was only suppressed with the loss of many valuable lives. "His daughters," says Eginhardt, "were very beautiful, and he loved them exceedingly. Happy in everything else, he was most unhappy in their character and conduct. He concealed, however, the grief which their conduct gave him, and conducted himself towards them as though ignorant of the evil reports to which their conduct gave rise." So true is it that sin always brings with it its own punishment—if we sow the wind we must reap the whirlwind.

In person, Charlemagne was a model of manly beauty. He was considerably above six feet high, and perfectly proportioned. His sword, Joyeuse, which he brandished as lightly as though it were a wand, was so huge and heavy that few even of the Frank warriors could wield it. In all military exercises, he was unrivalled. In swimming, which was one of the most important accomplishments of the German soldier, he especially excelled. It is said, that during his first campaign in Italy, Desiderius, having shut himself up within the walls of Pavia, stood upon the battlements looking on the invading army as it arrived before the city. The besieged monarch saw troop after troop march up without

FEAR
fear; but when he caught sight of Charlemagne, armed *cap à pie*, mounted on an iron-clad charger, he was so terrified at the commanding aspect of his enemy, that he rushed from the walls and hid himself.

The following description of Charlemagne's personal appearance and habits is taken from the romantic Chronicle of Turpin, written probably about two hundred years after his death : "The emperor was of a ruddy complexion, with brown hair ; of a well-made, handsome form, but a stern visage. His height was about eight of his own feet, which were very long. He was of a strong robust make ; his legs and thighs very stout, and his sinews firm. His face was thirteen inches long ; his beard a palm ; his nose half a palm ; his forehead a foot over. His lion-like eyes flashed fire like carbuncles ; his eye-brows were half a palm over. When he was angry, it was a terror to look upon him. He required eight spans for his girdle, besides what hung loose. He ate sparingly of bread, but a whole quarter of lamb, two fowls, a goose, or a portion of pork, a peacock, a crane, or a whole hare. He drank moderately of wine and water. He was so strong that he could cleave asunder, at a single blow, an armed soldier on horseback, from the head to the waist, and the horse likewise. He easily vaulted over four horses harnessed together ; and he could raise an armed man from the ground to his head as he stood erect upon his hand."

With equal exaggerations have the poets and

romancers of the middle ages perverted the events of his reign. In the language of sir James Stephen, "they have inverted the whole current of history, changed Charles the Glorious and the Wise into an enchanted knight, surrounded by his paladins, and elevated to the seventh heaven of chivalry his kinsman Rolando, of whom history only knows that he fell before the treacherous Gascons at the pass of Roncesvalles. Yet poetry, amidst all her wildest fictions, has in these legends perpetuated the record of one great and memorable truth—the truth, I mean, that the contemporaries of the great conqueror and their descendants cherished the traditions of his deeds with enthusiastic delight, and lavished on his memory every tribute which either history could pay or imagination offer."

We subjoin some account of these romantic histories of Charlemagne, and an abstract of one of them.

MEDLEVAL LEGENDS AND ROMANCES OF WHICH CHARLEMAGNE WAS THE HERO.

These are interesting and curious on many accounts. 1st, As showing how powerfully his character and achievements excited the admiration of his own and the succeeding ages. 2nd, As showing the utter ignorance of the simplest facts of history and geography which then prevailed. 3rd, Because the Chronicle of Turpin, from which all the others are derived, received

the sanction and seal of papal infallibility. How wild and extravagant were the absurdities to which pope Calixtus gave his attestation, let the readers of the following abstract of Roland and Ferragus judge :—

One hundred and three years after the death of Christ, Charles the king reigned over France, Denmark, England, Lorraine, Lombardy, Gascony, Bayonne, and Picardy, and he was emperor of Rome, and lord of Christendom. Ibrahim was king of Spain, and Constantius emperor of Constantinople. Now Ibrahim was a pagan who persecuted the Christians without mercy, and banished the patriarch of Jerusalem. The banished patriarch made his complaint to Constantius, who implored the aid of Charlemagne. Charlemagne with all speed proceeded to Constantinople, where he was received with all honour, and was offered presents in profusion, but he declined them all, and only asked the gift of a few relics which he prized much more highly. Constantius thereupon conducted him to the treasury where they were deposited. On opening the door, an odour of such uncommon sweetness and efficacy gushed out, that three hundred sick persons were cured on the spot. The crown of thorns, the holy lance, a piece of the cross inclosed in crystal, a nail from the cross, an arm of St. Simeon, Aaron's rod that budded, and many other relics, were given to him. Overjoyed at the acquisition of such treasures, he seems to have forgotten the business he came about, but being

addicted to star-gazing, he saw one night a flight of stars traverse the heavens and settle over Spain. This, with a vision of St. James, recalled him to a sense of his duty. The opening of the campaign was not very brilliant, for they besieged Pampeluna six months without being able to take it. At length, by the intercession of St. James, the walls fell down, and they entered without opposition. Ten thousand Saracens were thereupon converted, and the rest were hung. His success was now almost uninterrupted. He took sixty-six cities in succession. Only four offered him any serious opposition, and these he very speedily reduced by the simple operation of cursing them, on which they all four took fire, and continue burning to this day. The smoke and scent from those burning towns, one of which is Lucerne, is so poisonous that whoever breathes it dies in mortal agony. The narrator, afraid lest his statement should be doubted, here adds, "If any man will not believe me he may go to Spain and see for himself." After a succession of prodigies no less marvellous, they return to Pampeluna, and here they receive a visit from the ambassador of the sultan of Babylon. The purpose of his mission was very simple—it was to fight Charlemagne.

"He had twenty men's strength,
And forty feet of length,
That pagan had:
And four feet in the face,
(Twas measured on the place,)
And fifteen in the breadth;

His nose was a foot and more,
His brow as bristles wore,
(He that saw it said.)
He looked loathly
And was as black as pitch."

Charlemagne went out to reconnoitre his formidable foe, and after examining him limb by limb with minute attention, declined the challenge. Ogier the Dane, however, accepted it. Having armed himself with great care, he rushed like lightning upon his gigantic enemy, who received the fierce onslaught with perfect indifference, tucked the knight under one arm and his horse under the other, and quietly walked off the field with them to a neighbouring castle. Knight after knight accepted his defiance with the same result. At last, ten knights at once attacked the unbelieving monster, but all shared the same fate. At length, Roland, tired of seeing his brethren in arms thus carried away one after another, undertook the conflict. He armed himself with his famous sword, Durindal, and went forth on his perilous enterprise. The giant, recognising his adversary, put forth all his strength, pulled Roland from his horse, and was actually about to carry off the great champion of Christendom as he had done his comrades. But Roland contrived by a vigorous jerk to throw the giant down, and they fell upon the ground together. They fought for the remainder of the day on foot, Roland displaying his agility in avoiding the grasp of his enemy, and applying the edge of Durindal to all parts of his impenetrable hide,

but without producing the slightest effect, for his sword, though so well tempered as to cut the hardest marble, could not even scratch the skin of the huge Saracen. Next morning, the battle was renewed, Roland this time arming himself with a club. The fight continued till noon, when they began to throw stones at one another, but without any result for some hours, when the giant, wearied with his exertions, became immoderately sleepy, and requested a suspension of hostilities whilst he took a short nap. This was granted, and he immediately fell asleep and began to snore so loud as almost to deafen the whole army. Roland, whose courtesy was equal to his valour, naturally concluding that the monster's sleep could not be very pleasant or easy, selected one of the pieces of rock which had been pitched at him, and put it under the sleeper's head for a pillow, when his repose at once became more tranquil. The giant on awaking inquired to whom he was indebted for this act of kindness. On learning that it was his antagonist, he proposed that they should endeavour to decide the combat by debating instead of fighting. To this Roland consented. But from words they soon came back again to blows. In the course of the discussion, the Saracen had let out the secret of his being vulnerable in one point. Of this Roland availed himself in the ensuing conflict, and before night closed Ferragus lay dead upon the field.

We assure our readers that this romance, which we have divested of many of its wilder

extravagances, affords a favourable specimen of the sort of literature which was the chief, almost the sole, intellectual provision made for the common people through the mediæval period, and which passed among them as authentic history. Grateful ought we to be for living in a period when literature of a healthy character is so cheap and accessible to all.

The energy and activity of the emperor continued unabated to the last. In his seventieth year, feeling the infirmities of age creeping on, and apprehending that death was not very distant, he held councils at Arles, Rheims, Mentz, Tours, and Châlons sur Saone, for the purpose of settling the succession to the throne. In the same year he compelled the Norsemen to renew the treaty which they had violated, severely punished the Moors of Africa and the Mediterranean islands, who had insulted his old age by ravaging the coasts of Italy and France; and, according to his annual custom, attended the grand hunt, from which he returned to Aix la Chapelle on the 1st of November, 813.

In the middle of January, 814, he was seized with fever on coming out of the bath. He tried his usual remedy of abstinence and violent exercise, but without effect. He grew rapidly worse. Pleurisy came on. On the seventh day, he received the eucharist from the hands of the chaplain, Hildebald. On the following day, the 28th of January, he made a feeble effort to raise his hands, and feeling that death was near, he decently composed his limbs,

closed his eyes, calmly said, "Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and breathed his last. He was in the seventy-second year of his age, had reigned forty-seven years over the Franks, forty-three over the Lombards, and fourteen as emperor of the west.

He was interred in the cathedral erected by him at Aix la Chapelle. In order to distinguish from ordinary mortals, even in death, the potent monarch who had so signalized himself by his achievements during life, he was buried sitting in a chair of state, composed of ivory and gold. The chair is still shown at Aix, in attestation of the legend. How vain is the attempt to arrest the equalizing power of death by funeral pomp! In the grave the rich and the poor meet together before the Lord, who is the maker of them all. The testimony of one of the least of Christ's little ones, who had received only a cup of cold water in his name, forms a more valuable distinction than the blazonry of heralds, or the wealth of nations lavished on the funeral pile. The prayer of every one for himself should be, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Then, though our earthly lot be as obscure as Charlemagne's was illustrious, we shall inherit a crown of glory, which fadeth not away, and compared with which the diadem of the hero of our work was a paltry and insignificant bauble.

The righteousness to which this promise is annexed, however, must be more than that

which human merit can supply. Man, the inheritor of a fallen and corrupt nature, is altogether defiled and unclean. The just and holy law of his Creator demands a perfect obedience which he cannot give. Sin has ruined his soul. A ransom, however, has been found. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The righteousness which man could not supply the Saviour has wrought out. The penalty of transgression he has borne. He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and now God commandeth men everywhere to repent, and, by believing on the message of his grace, to be reconciled to him. May it be the reader's privilege to know, by a heartfelt experience, these blessed truths! Renouncing his own righteousness, and repenting of all sin, may he cling, by a simple faith, to the Son of God, as the only refuge for perishing sinners. Born again of the Holy Spirit, and in its strength taking up the Saviour's light and easy yoke, he will pass through life, animated by the highest hopes, and sustained by the richest consolations, until death shall unite him to that glorious throng who raise the everlasting anthem—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

Forebodings of Charlemagne as to the fate of his empire—Melancholy review of Florus—Civil wars—Ravages of the Northmen—Did the entire system of Charlemagne perish with him?—Summary of results—Practical deductions.

A MONK of St. Loup, writing a few years after the death of Charlemagne, says—"Charlemagne, always travelling, once came unexpectedly and by chance to a town on the coast of Narbonnese Gaul. Whilst he was at dinner, and before he had let it be known that he was in the town, Norman pirates came to commit their depredations in the very port. When the people of the town saw the vessels arrive they supposed that they were those of persons who had come to trade, and began to debate whether they were Jews, Africans, or Britons. But the able emperor, observing the construction and speed of the ships, said to his attendants, 'These are not the vessels of friendly merchants, but cruel pirates.' At these words, the Franks all ran to attack the corsairs, striving who should first reach them, but in vain. The Normans, learning that he whom they used to call Charles le Marteau, was there,

were at once seized with fear, lest their whole fleet should be captured or sunk by him ; they therefore escaped, by a flight inconceivably rapid, not from the swords only but from the very eyes of their pursuers. But the pious Charles, filled with awe, rose from the table where he had been sitting, went to the window which looked eastward, and long remained silently there with his countenance covered with tears. No one venturing to interrogate him as to the cause of his grief, the brave prince at length explained to the great men who stood about him the reason of his action and his tears. ‘ Know you, my friends,’ he said, ‘ why I weep so bitterly ? Truly I have no fear that these men can harm me by their miserable piracies, but I am deeply grieved that they have dared to touch these shores whilst I live, and I foresee, with irrepressible grief, the evils which, after I am dead, will overwhelm my successors and their people.”*

The fears thus expressed by Charlemagne for the fate of his empire were by no means groundless. Florus, a deacon of the church at Lyons, writing shortly before his death, which happened about fifty years after that of Charlemagne, thus mournfully contrasts the events of his youth with those of his old age. “ A noble empire then flourished under an illustrious prince. There was but one ruler and one people. Love on the one hand, and fear on the

* *Collection des Memoirs relatifs à l'Histoire de France*, Par M. Guizot.

other, maintained good order everywhere. The Frankish nation stood supreme before the world, whilst to it Greece, Italy, and the barbarous nations, sent embassies. But now how fallen! It has lost the splendour, the power, the very name of an empire. There is no one who can be regarded as emperor. Instead of a king, we see a kinglet; instead of a kingdom, a fragment. There is no longer a national assembly, no longer any administration of the laws, and, if an embassy arrives, it can nowhere find a court. What will become of the nations of the Danube, the Rhine, the Rhone, the Loire, the Po? Anciently united by the ties of peace, those bonds are now all broken, and they are rent asunder by miserable dissensions."

Something of the mournfulness of this review is probably to be ascribed to the petulance of old age, which, always in remembering its youth, is prone to say, "The former days were better than these." Still the description of the change which had passed over Europe is substantially true. The empire established by Charlemagne crumbled to pieces when he died.

So speedily did the work of disintegration and dismemberment begin, and so rapidly did it advance, that within fourteen years of the death of Charlemagne many of the German provinces had proclaimed their independence, and civil war was waged in the very heart of France itself. It is, indeed true, that this crisis was accelerated by the feeble and superstitious character of Louis the Meek, as he was called

by the monkish chroniclers of his day; but it is no less true that the empire could only be held together by the iron hand of the great emperor. Charles Martel, Pepin, and Charlemagne, father, son, and grandson, had in succession filled the Frankish throne with equal energy and power, and it was not to be expected that greatness should descend to the fourth generation—Louis proved himself unequal to the emergency. He was in consequence deposed three years afterwards. This had not the effect of allaying the storm, but rather aggravated it. Two years later, he was reinstated upon the throne, but a large number of the insurgent lords continued in rebellion. On the death of Louis the civil wars broke out with fresh vehemence and intensity. Men, women, and children, were indiscriminately slaughtered, churches burned, the consecrated places ransacked; nothing was sacred from the cruelty, avarice, and lust, of men whose passions seemed to have gathered new violence from their forcible repression during the long reign of Charlemagne. Intestine war produced external weakness. The Northmen, whose appearance on the coast had wrung tears of indignation and grief from the aged hero, now found nothing to repel their attacks. The ships which Charlemagne had caused to be built for the defence of the coast, and the guards he had stationed at the mouths of the rivers, had been disbanded; all the precautions which his far-seeing wisdom had taken against the growing power of these pirates had been

abandoned. The same generation which fought under Charlemagne saw these marauders sail up the Loire, plunder the populous and opulent towns upon its banks, and carry off so much spoil, that they were compelled to liberate their prisoners from want of space in their vessels. Similar ravages were carried on along the whole line of coast, and upon the banks of all the principal rivers. Whilst the northern and western shores were thus laid waste by pirates, the Saracens on the southern, and the Thuringians on the eastern frontiers, were not slow in the work of spoliation and revenge. Thirty years after the death of Charlemagne, Ragnar Lodbrog sailed up the Seine, seized and plundered Paris without any attempt at resistance, and having laden his barks with spoil, was induced to evacuate the city by a ransom of seven thousand pounds' weight of silver. To complete this picture of disgrace and ruin, it only remains to be added, that a Frank army marched past a detachment of the Northmen, who were ravaging the very heart of their country, without making any attempt to check them, from their eagerness to attack another party of their own countrymen in the neighbourhood; so that the invaders plundered the district in peace, whilst the two armies were fighting each other.* "Only fifty years had elapsed since

* If the Norman chroniclers are to be credited, when Charles the Simple, a few years later ceded Neustria (now Normandy) to them, they were required to do homage for it. Rollo would only consent to do homage by deputy. The grim warrior, who was summoned from the ranks for this purpose,

Charlemagne, at the zenith of his glory and power, had renewed the western empire ; several warriors, who had followed him to Rome, and who had assisted at his coronation, yet lived. They had, doubtless, thought to see the foundation laid of the most powerful of monarchies ; they saw all the strength of that monarchy annihilated without a struggle, all its frontiers invaded, all its treasures dissipated. There did not remain in the vast compass of the western empire, a single town that was secure against the attack of brigands and pirates. Paris had been taken by the Normans. Aix la Chapelle was taken the following year ; the suburbs of Rome had been burned by the Saracens.* All the other large towns had been in turn ravaged by the barbarians. In the course of a single generation, a great people had disappeared. Thus deceitful and transient is the greatness acquired by arms."* Before five generations had passed away, so completely had the integrity of the empire been destroyed, that it was split up into more than fifty distinct and independent principalities—the strife of races had begun anew—unrestrained anarchy again ran riot over Europe—darkness once more covered the earth and gross darkness the people.

Many historians, misled (as we think) by instead of stooping to kiss the king's foot, tried to raise it to his mouth. In doing so, he threw the poor monarch upon his back, and then retired amid the undisguised merriment of his comrades.

* Sismondi's *France under the Carlovingians*, chap. viii.

these appearances, have hence concluded that Charlemagne accomplished nothing permanent—that he was but as a flash of midnight lightning which gleams from the darkness, illumines the horizon for a moment, and then is swallowed up by the darkness again, leaving no trace behind. “For a time,” says one, “the reign of Charlemagne acted like oil upon the waters; but the day which God gave him passed by and all was storm again; he came as a sunbeam in a dark day, as a meteor in the tempest, dazzling and wonderful but shedding no permanent or abiding light.” “He was,” says another, “a torch, flung into the dark tempestuous abyss, soon to be extinguished and leaving no trace upon the gloom which for the moment it dispelled.” These rhetorical common-places are very apt to lead us astray. Never are we so likely to be betrayed into error, as when we base our arguments upon a metaphor. The view of the case taken by these writers, seems at best to be a partial and defective one. No era, no generation, is so unconnected with what precedes and what follows it, as these figures suggest, and these arguments assume. There are no episodes in history. All great epochs, parenthetic as they may appear, are yet indissolubly connected with what went before, and with that which succeeds them. Each generation is a link in the great chain of history. The course of events forms one connected whole, guided onward to some grand, and, as yet, unseen issues, by “the Prince of the

kings of the earth." Whilst it must be admitted, that very much of the system we have been tracing out did perish with its founder, it did not and could not all pass away. In the few lines which yet remain, we shall point out what was really permanent, and what was only temporary, in the influence exerted by Charlemagne upon his contemporaries.

1. He formed the point of transition from barbarism to feudalism. There was strife and insubordination in the era which succeeded his reign, as well as in that which preceded it, and scarcely less violent and intense; but it was altogether different in character. That of the former age sprang from the wild and uncontrollable impulses of barbarous hordes, who had no home, no country, who spurned all restraint and cared only for plunder. The violence of the subsequent age was that of the same races when they had been compelled to settle down within their own limits, when they had acquired something of a territorial nationality, and had organized feudal institutions. It would be altogether out of place here to discuss the nature or the merits of feudalism, beyond the remark, that it was a step in advance—a step necessary to be taken in the passage of Europe from the wild anarchy which followed the downfall of the Roman empire, to the settled order and progressive civilization of modern times.

2. The intellectual activity which formed the distinguishing glory of the reign of Charlemagne, did not pass away without leaving

results behind it. The preceding period had been one of utter darkness and stagnation. From the death of Boethius to the birth of Bede there is scarcely a single name recorded which we can mention with respect. The page of history is but the dull monotonous record of barbarous invasions narrated by barbarous chroniclers. But with the reign of Charlemagne there was a sudden outburst of intellectual life and activity. The torpor and inaction were at an end. So quick and complete was the change, that it can be compared only to the sudden bursting forth of an Arctic summer, which, in a few days, clothes the frozen barren soil with verdure and flowers. But was not the mental activity of this reign also like the arctic summer, in the brevity of its continuance as well as in the suddenness of its outburst? Was it not a forced and unnatural vigour, soon to relapse into sterility again? This may have been the case to some extent; but still, during that brief period, *germs and seeds were deposited which did not die*; which lay torpid for a time, but which in due season sprang up and bore abundant fruit. We can trace the influence of that revival of learning downward throughout the middle ages; sometimes latent, sometimes manifest; sometimes as seed below the soil; sometimes as fruits and flowers above it; but yet continuously existing and operating to the great era of revival in the fifteenth century, when the human mind, freed from the fetters which Rome had imposed

upon it for so many centuries, entered into the enjoyment of that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. God grant that our country may never be entangled with a second yoke of bondage!

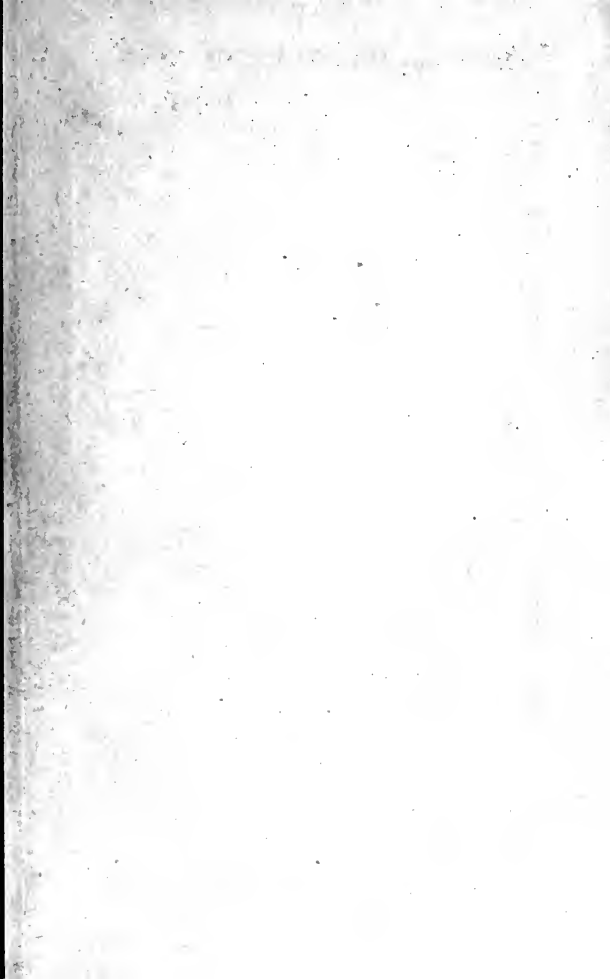
Whilst these results, which Charlemagne did not contemplate, and which he was the unconscious instrument in the hands of God of effecting, have remained to exercise a permanent influence upon Europe, that universal empire which he was ambitious to establish, perished with him. His history, in this respect, is that of all conquerors who have cherished the same design. It is not granted to mortal man to establish an universal monarchy. After an interval of a thousand years, on the same scene, Napoleon, in his towering ambition, aspired to this height. He aimed to become the Charlemagne of the nineteenth century, and to reconstruct the empire which had crumbled to pieces ten centuries before. How miserably he failed is fresh in the memories of all. From all his victories, which threatened to subdue the whole earth, he has only

“Left a name, at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral or adorn a tale.”

There can be but one universal monarchy. To the establishment of it all the vicissitudes of the world's history, the rise and fall of nations, the ambition of conquerors, the schemes of statesmen, are proving subservient. Already are the foundations of this empire laid—not in might but in weakness—by the shame, humiliation

and death of its King—this humiliation shall prove the glory of all his subjects—his poverty, their riches—his death, their life. He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet—till every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord. His empire is to be as lasting as it is universal ; “ Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom ; ” “ they shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.” It is a “ kingdom which cannot be moved,” “ though heaven and earth be shaken.” He shall rule his enemies “ with a rod of iron ; ” and “ dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel,” yet “ in his days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.”

“ Come forth out of thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth ! put on the visible robes of thy imperial Majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed thee ; for now the voice of thy bride calls thee, and all creation sighs to be renewed.”





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Life and times of
Charlemagne

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